SUMMER 2025 E-NEWSLETTER

At Digital Mountain, we assist our clients with their electronic discovery, digital forensics, cybersecurity, and data analytics needs For this E-Newsletter, we demystify the Meta Pixel and other website event tracking codes, as well as look at relevant court cases worth following.

Meta Pixel: The Technology in the Shadows

What strikes a chord with most people when it comes to conspiracy theories is that there always seems to be some kernel of possibility or some semblance of potential truth. Technology conspiracy theories are especially sticky for two reasons: (1) the pace of technological advancements is so rapid that our ordinary lives cannot keep pace, and (2) every once in a while, we learn of something already established but little publicized, that makes us stop in disbelief about its existence. Not long ago, the Meta Pixel was one of those

technologies. And what continues to surprise us is that we still encounter people who have never heard of the Meta Pixel and do not realize they interact with them each and every day. In this article, we will cover the technical aspects of the Meta Pixel and how it is being used.

Originally developed as the Facebook Pixel, the easiest way to describe the Meta Pixel is that it is the reason you may feel you are being stalked on the internet. If you have ever used a web browser and then opened another internet-based app that runs advertisements, you may have suddenly seen ads for the things you searched for previously. And if you got the feeling that it was not a coincidence, you are right – that was the power of Meta Pixel.

A pixel in common tech parlance is a small dot or square that is a single unit building block of an image. If you have encountered an image that appears blocky where the edges should be curved or round – you understand the concept of pixels. That has confused some folks as far as the Meta Pixel is concerned. The Meta Pixel is neither a small dot or a square – it is lines of code inserted into web pages that track certain actions by the page visitor and send that tracking data back to Meta's data aggregating platform. While the data is being sent back to Meta, it is not necessary for the page visitor to have a Facebook or Instagram account for Meta to use that data.

What is the purpose of the Meta Pixel code? By aggregating the data that comes back to Meta, internet commerce organizations can create vast amounts of targeted ads and place them on

individual Facebook pages that fall within the targeted profile. Meta can use that information to increase its revenue based on the ability to offer a tool that helps pinpoint and expand audiences for ads. Bottom line: Meta Pixel code tracks the internet activities through millions of websites to help sellers find more potential buyers and send them ads on Facebook.

For Meta Pixel to work to its full potential, the code has to be inserted into the header, or first lines of code, of every webpage that makes up a particular site. And yes, that includes the shopping cart page and the purchase page (although Meta states that it does not collect payment information for privacy reasons). The list of events that Meta Pixel can track is extensive. A list of the standard events can be found here Standard Events. Beyond the standard events, the Meta Pixel can be customized to track events that are specific to that website owner's needs. One example of a custom event would be using an age tracking option to create a custom audience of website visitors in a certain age group.

Before we get comfortable thinking that the way to avoid the Meta Pixel is to shop at the local, brick-and-mortar stores, Meta has actually created ways to track offline activity. Since many Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) units are internet connected, Meta has specific Pixel code that can be inserted into the operating software of the EPOS units that will report data back to Meta for inclusion in the data collected on purchasers. Buying a t-shirt at your favorite stadium with a credit or debit card? Expect that to be tracked. Getting a meal at your favorite restaurant? Good chance that even if you are paying with cash, that meal is tracked, even if you are not identified as the consumer. Your internet-enabled television may also be tracking your viewing content and providing that information through the use of a Meta Pixel. There is even a good chance that your mobile phone service provider, who is already capable of tracking your location data, is using your usage data to perform targeted marketing.

If you are feeling some discomfort with the ability of the Meta Pixel, you are not alone. We are also concerned with the fact that technology giants, such as Meta, and others like Google and Amazon Web Services, are amassing exponentially greater amounts of our personal information daily. Some may accept this as the new norm. While others who are educated about surveillance capitalism will advocate for privacy.

Please direct questions and inquiries about electronic discovery, digital forensics, cybersecurity, and data analytics to info@digitalmountain.com.

UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS

Black Hat USA 2025
Las Vegas, NV: August 2-7, 2025

OSMOSIS:DC EXPO
Washington, DC: August 6-7, 2025

ILTACON 2025
National Harbor, MD: August 10-14, 2025

The Sedona Conference Working Group 13 Midyear Meeting 2025
Reston, VA: September 11-12, 2025

ISSA-LA Security Summit
Los Angeles, CA: September 17-18, 2025

Click here to see more upcoming events and links.

Digital Mountain, Inc. Founder and CEO, Julie Lewis, will be presenting at various upcoming industry events. Please send requests for speaker or panel participation for her to marketing@digitalmountain.com.

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