



The Makofsky Minute | April 2, 2019

"Protect Your Digital Information" Series: Social Media, Emails and Other Online Accounts – Use of User Tools

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn... We all love to post fun pictures of our family vacations and announce major events in our lives; but what happens to all of our pictures and posts after we die? Who will have access to our emails when we are gone? How will a loved one access our most cherished pictures if they are only stored online or in the cloud?

The Information Age brought us technology that lets us share information with just a click of a mouse or a tap of a screen. We can communicate now in ways that our ancestors would never have imagined - email, Skype, text messaging, and Facetime to name a few.

But all this new technology also brings new concerns. Security problems and concerns about protecting one's private information have arisen. From an estate planning point of view, questions such as how to designate someone to have access to our emails and social media and online accounts after death are issues to be dealt with.

These concerns have provoked companies such as Google (whose products include Gmail, YouTube and Picasa) and Facebook to create user tools for allowing someone you trust to have access to your account in the event of death. Google, for example, now allows an

account owner to name an "Inactive Account Manager." This feature can be accessed through the user's profile page. The account owner can determine what will happen to his or her data in advance of the account becoming inactive. Facebook enables account holders to appoint a "Legacy Contact." A Legacy Contact is someone the account holder can choose to manage his or her account after death. The account holder can designate a Legacy Contact by going to Settings, Manage Account and then typing in the name of someone you trust to access your account after death. Be aware that these features are not typically part of the companies' Terms of Service Agreements and an account holder must take affirmative action to enable these features.

As technology continues to advance, we must remember that our digital assets are part of what we will leave behind. The days of storing our most treasured memories in photo albums are quickly disappearing. Protecting and preserving our digital information is now one more issue to address when creating a proper estate plan. If you would like us to review your estate plan, give us a call.

STAY TUNED for our next blog in this series, which will continue to discuss ways to protect and preserve other forms of digital information.



At Makofsky & Associates, P.C. we help our clients prepare for the future, protect their assets and meet tomorrow's challenges with proper planning today.

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ASSOCIATES, P.C.**
COUNSELORS AND ATTORNEYS AT LAW

(516) 228-6522
www.MakofskyLaw.com