

# Facebook Is Giving Advertisers Access to Your Shadow Contact Information | Gizmodo

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Last week, I ran an ad on Facebook that was targeted at a computer science professor named Alan Mislove. Mislove studies how privacy works on social networks and had a theory that Facebook is letting advertisers reach users with contact information collected in surprising ways. I was helping him test the theory by targeting him in a way Facebook had previously told me wouldn't work. I directed the ad to display to a Facebook account connected to the landline number for Alan Mislove's office, a number Mislove has never provided to Facebook. He saw the ad within hours.

What Facebook told Alan Mislove about the ad I targeted at his office landline number

Screenshot: Facebook (Alan Mislove)

One of the many ways that ads get in front of your eyeballs on Facebook and Instagram is that the social networking giant lets an advertiser upload a list of phone numbers or email addresses it has on file; it will then put an ad in front of accounts associated with that contact information. A clothing retailer can put an ad for a dress in the Instagram feeds of women who have purchased from them before, a politician can place Facebook ads in front of anyone on his mailing list, or a casino can offer deals to the email addresses of people [suspected of having a gambling addiction](#). Facebook calls this a "[custom audience](#)."

You might assume that you could go to your Facebook profile and look at your "contact and basic info" page to see what email addresses and phone numbers are associated with your account, and thus what advertisers can use to target you. But as is so often the case with this highly efficient data-miner posing as a way to keep in contact with your friends, it's going about it in a less transparent and more invasive way.

Source: [Facebook Is Giving Advertisers Access to Your Shadow Contact Information | Gizmodo](#)