



NSW Trustee and Guardian

Free guide to a social media afterlife

Take care of your online after life

Ninety per cent of us have social media accounts such as Facebook, but how many of us have planned for what should happen to them after we die? When it comes to shutting down your digital life, it's important to plan ahead.

What is a digital asset?

A digital asset can be defined as digitally stored content or an online account owned by an individual. This includes files on your computer, email, blogs, photographs stored online, frequent flyer points, online businesses and social media accounts like Twitter and Instagram. For some 'well connected' folk the list could be quite a long one.

What is the problem?

If you do not make plans for your online life the consequences could be significant. It might lead to assets of sizeable financial or sentimental value being lost, or handled in an inappropriate way. For example, if loved ones do not know of the existence of an online account it will be lost. If the password is unknown that account could be inaccessible regardless. There is also

potential for social media accounts to be treated in a way you would not have wanted. A LinkedIn account left 'live' can send updates of your work anniversary to your colleagues after your death.

What is the solution?

Planning ahead and including instructions for digital assets in your Will means you make the decision about what will happen to them after your death. Your assets can be properly distributed and looked after, saving loved ones unnecessary stress. You might have a blog that generates income or an online business that you would like to pass on to a relative or friend; with a good plan in place this is possible. You can make sure treasured family photographs are accessible and available for generations to come.

How do I do it?

A professional Will maker such as NSW Trustee & Guardian can ensure your Will is legally valid and guide you through the process of planning for your digital assets. There is a lot to consider, different online accounts contain various terms and conditions about what happens to the account when you die for example, with Facebook you can have your profile turned in to a memorial, deleted, or have the contents downloaded and then deleted. Some platforms allow you to set up a delegated user or legacy contact prior to your death (as is the case for Facebook).

There are risks in simply handing over your passwords. This is not recommended. If you would like your social media accounts deleted after death you need to make sure your executor is given the right information to make this happen. Do they know all the accounts you have? Do they know how to contact the relevant social media platform and what that platform's policy for account deletion or access is? It is an area that relies on the terms and conditions of the company involved – there is no uniformity, little legislation and it is not an area that has been widely tested in court at this stage, so it is worth talking to legal experts.

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