



WHITE PAPER



# COOKIE HANDLING

Internet Explorer

June 4, 2008

Version 2.0





# 1 Cookies

A cookie is a small piece of information that a web server can give to a web browser. The browser then returns this information to the web server with every additional request that is made.

Cookies are most commonly used to differentiate between users and to personalize a website. When adding a book to your shopping cart at Amazon.com, the programs at Amazon.com know which cart belongs to you thanks to the cookie set on your computer. The cookie identifies you as an anonymous visitor from all the other anonymous visitors visiting the website at the same time as you and allows Amazon.com to correctly assign you to the correct shopping cart.

Cookies cannot be used to magically identify you as an individual, your email address, street address, or any other personal information. The only exception to this is information that you explicitly give a particular website. If you tell a website your name, the website can then store your name, or some other identifier that links you to your name, so that the next time you visit the site your name will be known to the site. Cookies can not discover any information that you did not already give to the site. However, if you do disclose personal information to a site, a cookie can be used to then link you and the information you disclosed on all subsequent visits to the site.

For security purposes, a cookie can only be returned to a domain that set it. This means that when you are visiting Microsoft.com, cookies set by Yahoo.com cannot be read. In fact, when visitors pull up Yahoo.com in their browser, there is no way for the web servers to even see that they have Microsoft.com cookies, or that I have ever even visited Microsoft. More importantly, information that you may disclose to Yahoo.com cannot be recovered by Microsoft.com through the use of cookies. The cookie that Yahoo.com may have set to identify you cannot be seen when visiting Microsoft.

## 1.1 How does SiteCatalyst Use Cookies?

SiteCatalyst uses cookies to anonymously distinguish unique visitors from one another as well as to determine the last time the customer visited the site. SiteCatalyst does not use cookies to relate website visitors to any personally identifiable information.

While cookies are not essential to SiteCatalyst functioning correctly, they increase the accuracy of the data. For example, if two users are surfing from behind a firewall they will both have the same IP address. Without cookies these two users share an IP address and would be indistinguishable as two unique users. Setting cookies allows SiteCatalyst to accurately determine that there are two different users visiting the site.

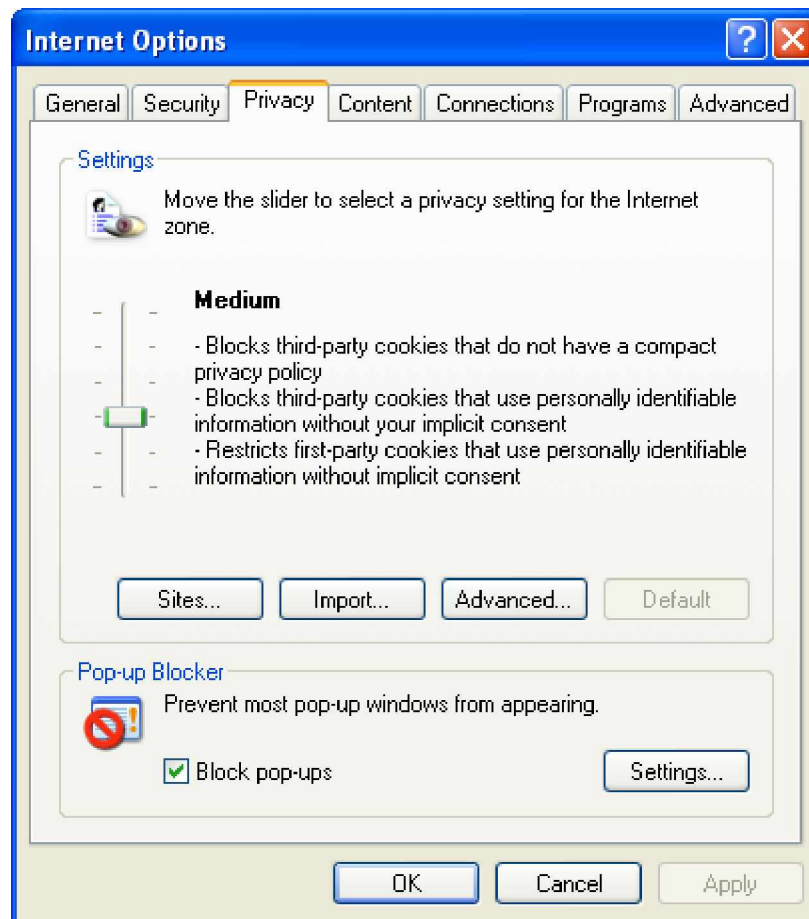
## 1.2 What is New in Cookie Handling?


Customer concern about Internet data privacy has been steadily growing. As a result, an emerging standard called P3P (Platform for Privacy Preferences- <http://www.w3.org/P3P>) has been introduced to allow end users automated control over which cookies the browser will accept and which cookies will be rejected. It ties the privacy policy of an organization to the cookies that the organization sets on your machine and allows you to create rules which will accept or reject cookies.

P3P compliant cookies include with every request to set a cookie a summary of the privacy policies of the website. If the cookie complies with the rules set by the user, the browser allows the cookie to be set. If it does not, the cookie is rejected.

Microsoft's IE 7.0 is the first browser to implement P3P. Microsoft's implementation includes a Privacy Tab in the internet Options Window. The privacy option can be set to one of six settings. The default setting is "Medium". Additional advanced options are available to the user for fine-tuning of P3P policies.

Figure 1-A: Internet Explorer Privacy Tab



Should a user encounter a site where a cookie is being set that either lacks a P3P policy, or where the privacy rules set by the customer do not comply with the summary of the privacy policy, a small red notification icon  is displayed in the IE 7.0 Status Bar. Double clicking the notification icon displays a list of URLs that attempted to set a cookie that either did not have a privacy policy, or where the privacy policy conflicts with a user's P3P settings.

## 2 Frequently Asked Questions

### How does Internet Explorer 7.0 Affect SiteCatalyst?

Privacy is an important issue to us at SiteCatalyst. We have long anticipated the inclusion of the emerging P3P standard in IE 7.0 and have worked with Microsoft to ensure that the cookies set by SiteCatalyst are fully P3P compliant. Additionally, as SiteCatalyst does not attempt to uniquely identify a user by name or other personally identifiable attribute, the SiteCatalyst P3P privacy policy is fully compliant with IE 7.0's default privacy settings. The introduction of P3P technology in IE 7.0 should not adversely affect the accuracy of the tracking, or the end-user's experience.

### If SiteCatalyst is P3P compliant, why do I see the red warning icon on pages with SiteCatalyst?

Cookies set on a computer before it was upgraded to IE 7.0 have been termed as "Legacy Cookies" because they were set before P3P, and therefore have no privacy policy associated with them, Microsoft has decided to block all legacy cookies. As a result, a returning visitor to your site who has since installed IE 7.0 will see a red warning icon in the status bar. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the privacy report that comes up when double-clicking on the icon fails to identify the fact that only legacy cookies are being blocked. After this first page load, the legacy cookie will be replaced with a P3P compliant cookie, and the privacy warning will not show up again.

### Why am I seeing the privacy warning after the first page load?

It is possible for a few of our customers who have slightly older tracking codes on their websites (and who have logged into the SiteCatalyst site) to continue to see the privacy warning even after the first page load. This is due to an interaction between a cookie that was set on your machine on logging in to SiteCatalyst and the cookie to track your visit to the website. Please realize that this is affecting only browsers who have visited your website and logged into SiteCatalyst. Your customers are not seeing this problem. If you have any questions about this issue, please contact Omniture ClientCare.



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