

# Liars at Facebook deny secretly recording users' conversations for targeted advertising...but they lie

The social network promises it isn't listening to you

By [Rob Thubron](#) on Oct 29, 2017, 1:00 PM [10 comments](#)



A lot of people have stories about Facebook allegedly listening in on a conversation via a mobile's microphone and using the info for targeted advertising purposes. Rumors that the social network has been surreptitiously engaging in this practice have been around for years, but one of its executives has just been forced to deny them once again.

PJ Vogt—the presenter of tech podcast Reply All—spoke about the claims on a recent show, which involved people calling in with their own tales of possible Facebook spying. This led to the company's president of ads, Rob Goldman, responding with a tweet that read: "I run ads product at Facebook. We don't - and have never - used your microphone for ads. Just not true."

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— Rob Goldman (@robjective) [October 26, 2017](#)

There are thousands of people who believe that after discussing a certain topic in the real world, a related ad later appeared on their Facebook feeds. While the site is filled with adverts, conspiracists say these particular ads feature the same obscure or specific products they were talking about, proving the company is up to no good.

Facebook is open about its [audio recording capabilities](#), but these only allow users who have opted-in to identify and tag music or television programs playing in the near vicinity. If the feature is enabled, it uses a microphone for 15 seconds when a person is writing a status update; it isn't used for advertising purposes, according to the company.

It's incredible just how many people claim to have experienced this 'listening' phenomenon—often more than once. I know a few people myself who swear it has happened to them. But in reality, it's hard to imagine that one of the largest, richest firms in the world would risk throwing everything away—and probable jail time—just to improve targeted advertising. Moreover, it's likely that Facebook doesn't yet possess the technology to make it possible.

Remember: Facebook does know a lot about you and your friends, and its ad algorithms use this data all the time. Perhaps some people forgot about a search they performed that was related to the conversation in question. But most of all, a lot of this comes down to pure coincidence.

Or maybe that's what they want you to believe.