

Reference: Open Letter to TradePub re. inappropriate use of FTA course books

*Amsterdam/Barcelona, 6 March, 2012*

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Dear TradePub,

we have observed your organisation is announcing our course books on your site, [1], and ask visitors to hand in their personal data before you provide a link to our works. While we are happy that other sites announce,[2], our works or republish them, we have a **complaint**. Before explaining the complaint, let me comment on your business practice.

The FTA course books are all published under copyleft licenses and therefore come with the freedom to be republished, adapted and shared free of charge. We believe this to be in the benefit of society at large and are happy to see other sites to profit from them, [3]. However, your site demands users first to hand in their personal data before you provide the link to the materials. While this is legally permitted, we, and with us many Internet users, don't find this a decent practice. After all, you just provide a link to free works without adding substantial value.

This is even more worrisome when we study your websites in more detail. You seem to imply the existence of some kind of collaboration between your site and ours, which is not true. You do however seem to work together with affiliated sites like LinuxQuestions. To illustrate the process, here are some example steps to get to our books through your site:

1. From LinuxQuestions, a search engine or any other site working with TradePub, one reaches a page onTradePub.com, [4], about the FTA GNU/Linux Basic course book, [5].
2. After hitting the "Request Now" button, the user is guided to a form, [6], to request a considerable amount of personal data.
3. After a user fills in her details, she needs to confirm a TradePub email before getting the link to the FTA course book. It has been observed that TradePub is on several blacklists and has instructions, [7], for their users on how to retrieve the email from their Spam folders.

We observe that in step two, where the user enters her personal details, the website design is such to make the user think she is on an FTA page. This insinuates TradePub collects these data on behalf of the FTA, which is absolutely not true. In TradePubs overview page of FTA materials, [8], it says: "*The following free offers are provided to you on behalf of Free Technology Academy (FTA).*" However you have never contacted us about this, nor did we agree on this.

Furthermore there is a copyright notice, on each of these webpages, that makes one think that the site and perhaps also the documents, are copyrighted by NetLine Corporation. As you will know, the FTA books are not copyrighted by NetLine Corporation at all, and – to avoid any confusion - it should be mentioned that they are under free licenses (GNU FDL and CC BY-SA).

The mere suggestion of endorsement or relation harms the FTA's reputation - and it is certainly incorrect. TradePub clearly asserts endorsement by FTA using the logo next to the Request button and

in the Request form header. And this represents a violation of CC-BY-SA Unported, [9]:

*4. Restrictions (excerpt)*

Your rights under this License, You may not implicitly or explicitly assert or imply any connection with, sponsorship or endorsement by the Original Author, Licensor and/or Attribution Parties, as appropriate, of You or Your use of the Work, without the separate, express prior written permission of the Original Author, Licensor and/or Attribution Parties."

For these reasons we request TradePub and its partners to change these pages in such manner that no confusion with the FTA pages is made. We look forward to your written reply.

**References**

- [1] <http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/?pt=adv&page=Free%20Technology%20Academy%20%28FTA%29>
- [2] <https://ftacademy.org/press/fta>
- [3] <http://ftacademy.org/materials>
- [4] [http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/free-offer/gnu-linux-basic/w\\_freb01](http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/free-offer/gnu-linux-basic/w_freb01)
- [5] <http://ftacademy.org/materials/fsm/13#1>
- [6] [http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/free/w\\_freb01/prgm.cgi](http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/free/w_freb01/prgm.cgi)
- [7] <http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/?p=main&page=whitelistth>
- [8] <http://linuxquestions.tradepub.com/?pt=adv&page=Free%20Technology%20Academy%20%28FTA%29>
- [9] <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>

yours sincerely,



Wouter Tebbens

President of the Free Knowledge Institute

*on behalf of the FTA Community and the Free Knowledge Institute, legal host of the Free Technology Academy*