

Planning for your Digital Estate

Have you heard the news about digital estate planning, or seen the Facebook posts urging you to plan for what happens to your account at your passing? For those with online accounts—this includes online bank accounts, social media accounts, and photography accounts, and blogs — these are part of your digital estate. And just like your physical assets, your digital assets also need protection.

A digital estate can cause real headaches for grieving loved ones who may be attempting to access those accounts. The first step in planning your digital estate is to write down your passwords and make sure a trusted relative, or two, will know how to access those passwords at your passing.

Google has the option of having trusted contacts access their accounts or to have the data deleted after a specific period of inactivity. Facebook recently started the “legacy contact” option, which lets their users select someone to manage their pages after death. If a user doesn’t do anything, and Facebook discovers that the individual has passed, his or her posts will remain active and “memorialized” according to that user’s settings.

It is important for you to plan ahead and put someone in charge of these digital assets, so your family would have the opportunity to take over if something were to happen to you—allowing them to control the information. Another aspect of your digital estate planning should also be your digital devices, like cell phones and laptops, along with the data they contain. Make sure that your family has access to these items and the data they contain.

Pictures, music, videos, and documents make up our digital life. Make sure that you’re prepared to pass those on. An experienced estate planning attorney at Sweet & Maier, S.C., can help guide you through this process of protecting your digital estate.