

# CourseCast of the Week

*Episode 120,*

*Title/Description:* FCC Pushes for Net Neutrality, Facebook Switches off Beacon, Total Information Awareness Déjà Vu, Unrealistic Expectations, and other News Headlines

Welcome to Course Technology's CourseCast of the week, Episode 120, recorded September 26th, 2009. This is Ken Baldauf bringing you this week's technology news and information. This CourseCast is brought to you by Course Technology. Check out [www.cengage.com/coursestechnology](http://www.cengage.com/coursestechnology) for innovative textbooks and creative electronic learning solutions. Visit the CourseCasts Website at [coursecasts.course.com](http://coursecasts.course.com) where you will find links to the full stories covered in this CourseCast, related discussion questions for use in your technology courses, and the CourseCast Archives.

And now the news...

## **Story 1: FCC Pushes for Net Neutrality**

In a recent speech by FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, it was made clear that the Chairman strongly supports network neutrality. Network neutrality refers to principles that provide a free and unobstructed flow of data over the Internet. Network neutrality has become an issue in recent years as it has become apparent that some Internet service providers are restricting certain types of Internet traffic. Chairman Genachowski wants to implement new FCC policies that will give teeth to network neutrality principles. "These principles can be summarized as: Network operators cannot prevent users from accessing lawful Internet content, applications, and services of their choice, nor can they prohibit users from attaching non-harmful devices to the network," said the Chairman. In addition, the Chairman wishes to crack down on discrimination in the industry. He intends to stop Internet service providers from blocking services from competitors. He also plans to create rules that will force companies to be transparent about their Internet management policies.

If the Chairman is able to carry out his plans, it would put an end to many inhibitive policies enforced by Internet service providers including the big cellular companies. It will also provide opportunities for small companies that are currently unable to gain access to the market. Consumers could benefit from more products and services and lower prices brought on by increased competition in the market. One example of a positive consequence would be that AT&T and Apple would be forced to finally allow iPhone owners to utilize their iPhones to connect their computers to the Internet. The Chairman's speech is being hailed by consumer advocacy groups, while the telecom industry is warning of unintended negative consequences. With this latest speech we can be assured that Network Neutrality will be a major topic in the news for at least the next year.

- [FCC Chair Leads Charge on Net Neutrality Battlefield](#) [Ecommerce Times]
- [FCC chairman calls for formal net neutrality rules](#) [Computerworld]
- [FCC Net neutrality proposal is 'dramatic shift' in policy](#) [Computerworld]

## **Story 2: Facebook Switches off Beacon**

After years of controversy, Facebook is finally shutting down Beacon. Beacon is the technology that follows users around between participating Web sites, and reports back to Facebook what the person views, purchases or rents. That information is then being published to the user's news stream. For example, Beacon might post that Josh just rented "P.S. I Love You" from Blockbuster for

all of Josh's friends to read. Beacon is a powerful tool for collecting detailed information on Facebook user's interests which can then be used for product endorsements and targeted advertising. Upon its initial release, many Facebook users and privacy advocate groups loudly condemned the technology which motivated Facebook to change it to an opt-in service. Now, after being further influenced by a San Jose court, Facebook is completely shutting down Beacon and donating \$9.5 million to an organization that fights for online privacy.

- [Privacy advocates hail Facebook's plan to shutter Beacon](#) [Computerworld]
- [Facebook Beacon shines for last time as part of settlement](#) [Ars Technica]

### **Story 3: Total Information Awareness Déjà Vu**

Some recently declassified government files have revealed a massive FBI data-mining operation that some fear threatens the privacy of U.S. citizens. The FBI has accumulated one and a half billion records on citizens and foreigners that when correlated provide a detailed account of people's activities. The records include financial information, and transaction data from rental car companies, hotels, airlines, and dozens of other types of businesses. While originally designed for hunting terrorists, the database is now being used in domestic criminal investigations. Privacy advocates warn that the database comes dangerously close to implementing the "Total Information Awareness" system that was shut down in 2003 due to concerns over privacy and civil liberties.

- [Newly Declassified Files Detail Massive FBI Data-Mining Project](#) [Wired]

### **Story 4: Unrealistic Expectations**

You are probably aware that most photos of today's celebrities and fashion models that are published in magazines and other media are touched up to make them look more alluring. Photo shop artists are able to reduce waistlines by inches, add curves and bulges where desired, eliminate blemishes, and basically make people look better than is humanly possible. Some people are concerned that such tweaking sets up unrealistic expectations in society. Well, the French government is making an effort to address the issue. French law makers are crafting a law that would require enhanced photos to include a disclaimer informing the public that the image has been altered.

- [Warning: this unrealistic image has been Photoshopped](#) [Ars Technica]

### **News Briefs**

- Microsoft appears to be working on a new type of tablet PC. Images of a book-like device with dual 7" touch displays were leaked to Gizmodo this week. If well-informed rumors are true, 2010 will see an interesting battle between tablet PCs from both Microsoft and Apple. [Reports: Microsoft's 'Courier' tablet to compete with Apple](#) [Computerworld]
- A new eBook reader from the Netherlands will make its debut at Best Buy next month. The iRex DR800SG is one of Europe's most popular eBook readers, and will soon compete in the US against the Kindle and Sony's Readers. The iRex reader is similar in style and function to its US competitors, but sports an 8" touch screen. iRex owners will be able to wirelessly access books, newspapers, and periodicals from Barnes & Noble's huge library, and NewspaperDirect using Verizon's wireless data network. The entrance of the iRex, Best Buy, and Verizon into the eBook market bumps up competition in this new and rapidly growing industry. [Best Buy and Verizon Jump Into E-Reader Fray](#) [NY Times]

- Google has released a plug-in for Internet Explorer that allows IE to run ten times faster. The Google Chrome Frame plug-in effectively runs Google's Chrome Web browser within IE boosting its performance especially with JavaScript. Microsoft responded to the new plug-in by warning customers not to install it as it interferes with IE's security and privacy features.  
[Microsoft blasts Google over Chrome Frame plug-in](#) [Computerworld]  
[IE8 runs 10 times faster with Google plug-in](#) [Computerworld]
- In IT business news, Dell announced that it will purchase Perot Systems for \$3.9 billion. Perot Systems provides IT services to businesses and organizations. Dell intends to use Perot for global services delivery.  
[Dell agrees to buy Perot Systems](#) for \$3.9B [Computerworld]
- Intel has released the fastest laptop chip ever manufactured. The new quad core processor named Core i7 features micro architecture enhancements that allow the chip to outperform the existing Core 2 chips. The Core i7 is designed for high-performance gaming notebooks, but a related chip is due out soon for standard notebooks.  
[Intel releases fastest laptop chips to date](#) [Computerworld]
- If you've been having some technical problems with Facebook, you're not alone. Facebook has admitted to problems having to do with its database causing disappearing content, logon difficulties, problems with posts, and the inability to view some profiles. Facebook engineers are working to fix the problems.  
[Facebook confirms site glitches](#) [Computerworld]
- Google has been experiencing some issues AGAIN as well. Google News and Gmail both experienced some hours of down time this week.  
[Google News crashes this afternoon](#) [Computerworld]  
[Gmail back up after outage](#) [Computerworld]

That's it for this week's CourseCasts. This week's shout out goes to Steve Almond and his students at Hanceville High School in Alabama. Go Bulldogs! Thanks for listening! Email me with your comments and suggestions for the show at [coursecasts@gmail.com](mailto:coursecasts@gmail.com) Let me know how you use CourseCasts in your classes and I'll give you and your school a shout out on my next CourseCast. Until next time, have a great week and be sure to take advantage of the Power -- of Technology!