



Testimony of
J. David Grossman, Vice President of Policy & Regulatory Affairs
Consumer Technology Association
Informal Hearing: Trade Regulation Rule on Impersonation of Government and
Businesses
January 17, 2025

Introduction and CTA Background

Good afternoon, Your Honor. My name is David Grossman. I am vice president of policy and regulatory affairs at the Consumer Technology Association, or CTA. I am here on behalf of CTA to highlight the impact that impersonation fraud—and particularly the impersonation of individuals—has on our organization and our industry, and to support the need for continued action by the Federal Trade Commission to protect businesses, organizations, and consumers. With that in mind, CTA supports the current proposal to expand the existing Impersonation Rule to cover impersonation of individuals.

CTA is North America’s largest technology trade association. Our members and customers are the world’s leading innovators—from startups to global brands—helping to support more than 18 million jobs. CTA also owns and produces CES, the most powerful tech event in the world. CTA members operate in a competitive marketplace to produce innovative products that provide enormous benefits to consumers and power the economy. CTA thanks the Federal Trade Commission for its careful consideration of the record and thoughtful analysis as it continues its Impersonation Rule proceeding.

CTA Strongly Supports the FTC’s Efforts to Combat Impersonation Fraud

CTA has always been supportive of the FTC’s efforts to combat impersonation fraud and has strongly supported the FTC’s adoption of the existing impersonation rule targeting government and business imposters. CTA believes that enforcement of the Commission’s current rule will benefit consumers, businesses, and organizations by helping to combat damaging brand impersonation fraud committed through various communications channels.

As CTA emphasized at the FTC’s May 2023 Informal Hearing in this proceeding, impersonation fraud is personal for CTA. In all-too-common circumstances over the past several years, CTA members, customers, employees (including association leadership) and CTA itself have been victimized by impersonation fraud through different kinds of email solicitation scams, website domain scams, and other forms of impersonation scams.

CTA remains keenly interested in stopping impersonation fraud targeting CES, its flagship annual event. CTA owns and produces CES, which just wrapped its 2025 conference in Las Vegas last week, and which welcomed two FTC Commissioners as speakers.

Unfortunately, since 2021, our customers and members have reported at least 100 different instances of fraudulent email solicitations related to CES, with almost 30 reports

already coming in from before this year’s show. In an environment marked by rising and increasingly sophisticated impersonation scams, this number likely undercounts the number of fraudulent solicitations distributed to CTA members, CES exhibitors, and conference attendees.

These fraudulent emails—using either the CES logo or other CTA or CES branding such as “Consumer Electronics Show” or “Eureka Park”—purport to sell CES attendee lists, which CTA does not sell or otherwise make publicly available. CTA and CES remain targets of impersonation fraud because conventions like CES are central to commerce and business. In targeting these large conventions like CES, bad actors take advantage of entrepreneurs who eagerly invest in these events to expand their businesses.

CTA also endures multiple instances of brand impersonation fraud through website domain scams each year. For example, CTA has identified multiple websites claiming to sell hotel rooms for CES using the official logo. While CTA attempts to stop these scams, existing tools such as cease and desist letters offer little recourse, as fraudsters typically ignore such correspondence. Similarly, while CTA files trademark infringement claims with relevant domain registrars, CTA cannot always pursue informal trademark claims without also filing a formal complaint in a court of competent jurisdiction. Compounding these harmful scams, brand impersonation reports increase during the lead-up to CES—the exact timeframe during which CTA and its employees have limited time, bandwidth, and redress options to painstakingly combat brand fraud attempts. Simply put, CTA has first-hand experience with the ramifications and harmful effects that impersonation fraud has on the industry, CTA members, and consumers.

Additionally, as CTA has highlighted throughout this proceeding, impersonation scams also victimize consumers by impersonating trusted companies, including CTA members. In turn, these companies have their reputations severely injured by this fraud.

CTA reiterates its strong support for the FTC’s efforts in this proceeding to target and thwart impersonations. CTA also thanks the Commission for acknowledging and carefully considering its comments when adopting the current Impersonation Rule. CTA also commends the Commission for withdrawing its proposal, in the March 2024 Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, to add a “means and instrumentalities” provision to the Rule, which CTA and many other commenters opposed. The Rule should be focused on enforcement against the fraudsters themselves, and the proposed prohibition on impersonation of individuals will do just that.

CTA Supports Expanding the Rule to Cover Impersonation of Individuals

Given the appropriate focus of the Impersonation Rule on targeting fraudulent actors, CTA agrees that the Rule should be expanded to cover impersonation of individuals. From the perspective of consumers targeted by scams, impersonation of individuals can be just as harmful as impersonating a business or government entity. Scammers that are willing to impersonate businesses or government entities can just as easily attempt to impersonate individuals, and these different kinds of impersonation by fraudsters should not be treated differently under the FTC’s rules.

Again, turning to an example from CTA's experience, CTA and its members have been victimized by a fraudster impersonating a CTA employee to defraud thousands of dollars from a potential CES exhibitor in exchange for nonexistent booth space. To impersonate the CTA employee, the bad actor used actual employee signature information and included ".cta" as part of the user email address. Eventually, the fraudster deceived a company seeking to reserve CES event space into wiring thousands of dollars into an overseas bank account. Thankfully, the victimized company ultimately realized the scheme and pursued legal action against the bad actor to recover the duplicate fund paid to the fraudster. The company also participated in CES after paying CTA directly for exhibit space. However, this type of impersonation is incredibly dangerous and threatens to deceive CTA customers as well.

Even closer to home, CTA employees have repeatedly received text messages, purported to be from CTA CEO Gary Shapiro and other association executives, requesting that they purchase gift cards on their behalf. Although employees are continuously reminded to be vigilant and delete any text message making such a request, the messaging by these fraudsters has become more personalized and a few employees have fallen victim to this form of impersonation.

Impersonation of individuals can also perpetuate the brand impersonation fraud suffered by CTA and its members, particularly in the form of customer service and technical support scams. As CTA highlighted in its NPRM comments, scammers target consumers impersonating representatives of well-known consumer technology brands to convince customers that there have been unauthorized purchases using their accounts. The fraudsters instruct consumers to call a fake phone number for assistance, which connects the consumers to live scammers falsely claiming to be representatives of or working with the consumer technology company. Once connected with consumers, scammers offer fraudulent support or repair services as an excuse to gain remote access to computers or accounts, steal personal and banking information, install malware, and/or defraud the customer into making purchases or payments for the scammer's benefit. These types of fraudsters should be held liable regardless of whether they are impersonating a specific business or individual.

Finally, we have seen the startling evidence in the rulemaking record of other types of individual impersonation scams, including impersonation of friends and family members, and romantic interests, which have financially injured so many consumers.

Despite any differences in *how* scammers implement these impersonation scams, one similarity is exceptionally clear: impersonation scams victimize consumers and businesses nationwide. CTA and its members are dedicated to stopping impersonation fraud and encourage the FTC to continue its efforts and use its resources to bring actions against this kind of fraud.

CTA Encourages the FTC to Continue Fighting Fraud

Going forward, CTA encourages the FTC to take a holistic view on efforts it can take to fight fraud, including fraud that harms both consumers and disadvantages law-abiding businesses in the marketplace. CTA encourages the FTC to raise awareness with consumers, industry, non-profits, and other government agencies of the risks associated with impersonation scams. For

example, building on its extensive experience, the FTC can develop resources for consumers such as articles, workshops, podcasts, or consumer alerts highlighting the dangers associated with impersonation of individuals. It can promote consumer and business education so that potential victims are better able to identify and report scams. These could include webinars, discussion panels, and articles and blog posts underscoring resources and tips that companies can implement to keep their employees and consumers safe.

The FTC could also highlight the options available to companies and organizations whose brands and reputations have been exploited by frauds caused by impersonation of government, businesses, or individuals – including how best to work with the FTC to help investigate and take action against these frauds. Overall, CTA supports focusing the FTC’s resources on targeting fraudulent conduct, including using authorities like the Impersonation Rule.

As the FTC moves forward with enforcement against fraudsters, CTA stands ready to assist, including by helping to raise awareness of warning signs and risks. CTA remains willing to help facilitate partnerships with industry to gather information and amplify consumer and business education, to work together with the FTC to combat impersonation fraud.

Conclusion

Thank you, Your Honor and the FTC, again for the opportunity to testify. We support the proposed extension of the Impersonation Rule to impersonation of individuals, and look forward to continuing to work with the FTC in its efforts to fight impersonation fraud.