

WILL INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT PRIVACY ISSUES HAVE TO BE REDEFINED?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate changes in the perception and attitude toward disclosure of information, particularly privacy information, demonstrated by the Millennium Generation (also called Gen Y) information systems (IS) student and how the IS manager may have to adapt to these changed perceptions and attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennial Generation (Gen Y) includes those born from 1981 to the year 2000, compared with the Gen X Generation those born between 1965 and 1980, the Boomer Generation those born between 1946 and 1964, and the Silent Generation those born before 1946. While many articles have been written on how to educate these millennial students in ethical decision-making, little attention has been paid concerning how their definition of privacy and policy of disclosure of information is radically different from previous generations. The question is how will employers and managers have to change to meet the expectations of their new workers? All of this will have to be done in a world full of rapidly expanding legal regulations concerning privacy and disclosure.

This paper will focus on two questions about disclosure of information, especially privacy concerns. First, what do we see that is different in the millennial students' perceptions and attitudes toward information, privacy, ethics, and values? Second, how will the IS manager respond to these differences? To answer the first question this section reports on surveys that approach the issues of how teenagers who are confident in their ability to make ethical decisions regard dishonest and even violent behavior as necessary for success. "The high percentages of teenagers who freely admit that unethical behavior can be justified is alarming," said David Miller, "It suggests an attitude of ethical relativism and rationalization of whatever actions serve one's immediate needs and purposes . . . this way of thinking will inevitably lead to unethical if not illegal actions that will damage individual lives and ruin corporate reputations." [10].

Curtis, Dempster, & Farley present a great example of this lowered attitude toward information security. They tell the story about Gen Y "team members in a company using free Google Apps and e-mail to communicate among themselves and with a top client. The Gen Y team members decide to do this because it's a cheap and easy way to share documents across firewalls, even though it is against their company's policies on data protection. The team is productive and the client is happy and engaged. Nonetheless, the team is clearly breaking policy and exposing confidential client information on the open Internet." [3].

The question is, how will the IS manager handle this type of ethical dilemma? On the subject of personal privacy and values Curtis, et al. state that “attitudes toward privacy appear to be changing. One out of four working Millennials say they write openly about themselves and friends online, and one in six claim they have no secrets online.” [3]. This paper explores the privacy issues that IS Managers will have to consider.

A set of references are available on request from the authors.