



Chapter IX

Computer Security in Small Business—An Example from Slovenia

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of an investigation conducted in Slovenia from November 1999 until January 2000, focusing on some basic computer security problems and use of information technology (IT) and information systems (IS) in 122 small Slovenian businesses. The average number of total employees was 5.7, including the owner of the small business. In some countries, businesses of this size are also called ‘very small businesses.’ According to that, this chapter is dedicated to small business owners/managers or those dealing with small businesses. In the first section I present the main reason for this research and discuss some previous research dealing with small business use of IT and computer security practice. In the following section I define small business and the methodology that I used for data collection and analysis. The results were based on interviews given by the owners or managers of these companies. In the results section the overall purpose of this study is presented. The aim of the research was to assess why some Slovene small businesses do not use IT, how IT and IS are used in small businesses, what kind of security measures are used, how many and what kind of problems they had with computer hardware and software, and how they managed to solve those problems. I compare the results with some similar research in other countries.

Additionally, I tested if computer security practice factors are in correlation with intensive use of IS in general, because in the literature available there was no research dealing with this. Based on the survey and the literature, recommendations have been given how to better operate the business IS (backup procedures, use of Uninterruptible Power Supply [UPS], computer virus policy and so forth) to prevent dangerous data loss for small companies and others working in connection with them.

BACKGROUND

Back in 1991, after Slovenia separated from Yugoslavia and the establishment of small businesses was in full progress, I found that in Slovenia there was little research on small business, especially on computer use. In 1992 I conducted preliminary research on IT use in small Slovene businesses (Werber and Zupancic, 1993) and found out that there is enough IT available, but it was not used in an adequate way. At that time, I also established a friendship with some small business owners and collected information about their problems with computer use in their businesses. In most cases, owners asked for assistance when their data was lost or their hardware or software did not work as expected. When I searched the international literature, I found that there was very little research in small business in the computer security field. Then, the 'year 2000' computer problem came and I conducted research on how small Slovene businesses were prepared for it (Werber et al., 1999). Once again, I was surprised at how little understanding there was among small Slovene business owners about the year 2000 computer problem and how they planned to solve this problem. In most cases, they planned to purchase new PCs in the last months of 1999. That was when I first had indications that the information available for computer security in small Slovene businesses was not adequate. Searching the international literature again, this time especially on computer security in small businesses, I was surprised to find very few articles dealing directly with this problem.

In Slovenia, with less than 2 million inhabitants, small business is as an essential part of the economy as in other countries. Small business accounts for approximately 94% of all businesses and employs 34% of total employment. In the last six years, there have been 40,000 new positions created in the small business sector, most of them (34,246) created by small business and independent entrepreneurs (SBW, 15/1999). These facts, and the interest of small business owners, encouraged me to conduct this research.

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