

Chapter 19

Privacy, Trust, and Business Ethics for Mobile Business Social Networks

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ABSTRACT

New information and communication technologies and their integration extend possibilities for high-level human collaboration. Various groups of people can come together according to their private or business interests forming a virtual community through social networks. However, in addition to the positive effects of this technical breakthrough there are dangerous potential side effects using these high-level networked systems; the sensitive personal or business data can be misused. Therefore, privacy has an increasingly important role in social networks and is becoming a significant area related to business ethics taking into consideration the close connection between trust and privacy. The goal of this chapter is to discuss the role and relationships between trust and privacy in mobile (business) social networks and to introduce the possible types of privacy threats and countermeasures in case of online social networks. A short summary on future trends in mobile social networks is also presented.

INTRODUCTION

There always has been a strong need among people to share information and knowledge. This need of information exchange initiates the communication using different media both in private and professional life. The new technologies widen the world for individuals to reach other human beings inde-

pendently of where they are on the globe. Various groups of people can come together according to their private or business interests, forming a virtual community through social networks.

A social network (SN) is a social structure made of individuals (or organizations) that can be termed “nodes”, and the links that are the different types of relationships/interdependency established

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between nodes. In fact, a social network is based on two parameters: nodes and links. The nodes define the content of the relationships (links) according to their theme/interest/attendance (e.g. trade financial, friends, kinship, dislike, trade, sexual relations, disease transmission (epidemiology)). An important attribute of a link is the type of information exchange/communication technology (e.g. using mobile equipment). Today social networks use web-based services, so the type of communication can modify the behavior of nodes, the communication habits of SN users.

In the generation and operation of these communities cooperation and collaboration have a significant role. On the other side these new communication technologies deeply modify traditional forms of social connections, communication and cultural habits as well. These modifications can be observed in particular in hierarchies, social rules, norms, conventions, familiarity and reputation.

A very important element of human contacts is trust. In a networked society, trust is the atmosphere, the medium in which actors are moving (Castelfranchi and Yao-Hua Tan, 2001). Trust can bridge the cultural, geographical and organizational distances of members. Trust is the basis of cooperation, the accepted behavior of the human being in society. As the rate of cooperation is increasing in all fields of life, the importance of trust is evolving even faster. In this new communication environment new methods and techniques of trust building have to be developed, as the conventional rules of the face-to-face approach cannot be applied. According to different experiments the level of trust is highly influenced by the way/mode/medium of communication and by the duration of contact (Mezgár, 2005). Himmelman developed a hierarchy of partnerships (Himmelman, 1997) based on the amount of trust, time, and risk needed to establish and maintain the partnership. In Him-

melman's framework, networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating mean different concepts and are built on each other.

Privacy is another important element of using networks. Privacy is the right of an individual to be secure from unauthorized access, disclosure and being able to control information about oneself that is contained in different documents/files, databases or Web-pages. The degree/rate of privacy usually correlates with trust – the stronger privacy is, the higher is the level of trust.

Online Social Networks (OSNs) show an extremely quick expansion today. According to Wikipedia (Wikipedia, 2014 June) the number of members of some OSNs are the following (in millions): Facebook – 1280, MySpace - 30, Tagged - 100, Twitter - 94, LinkedIn - 200, XING – 11. The rate of connecting to OSNs by mobile (smart) phones is about an average 71% of the OSN members (Bullas, 2014) and the role of privacy is increasing as well (this is shown by providers' announcements on developments in their privacy rules and software abilities).

The remainder of this paper has the following structure. Section one gives a short overview on online social networks (OSNs) including business social networks (BSNs), the application trends of mobile technology both in social networks (mobile social networks - MSNs), and in business social networks (mobile business social networks - MBSNs). In the second section the role of trust and privacy in the mobile business social networks is discussed and an overview is presented on privacy threats and countermeasures in OSNs. The connections between privacy and business ethics in OSN are introduced in this section. The third section summarizes the future trends and research directions in development of mobile business social networks.

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