

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) — Technology Sector

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the development of new technologies are closely interwoven. Technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, Web cameras and online games often develop faster than regulatory schemes to control their use. Such technology can be used in a variety of ways that harm children including commercial sexual exploitation, harassment, intimidation, socialization to violence, and psychological manipulation.

Potential for Harm to Children

The Internet has allowed for greater means to normalize depictions of sexual conduct between adults and children. Harm to children can occur in the development of abusive images as well as in the viewing of such images. Children may be systematically abused so adult consumers can have a continuous supply of new material.

Although statistics are hard to gauge, it is estimated that 76 percent of encounters between offenders and their victims is initiated in an online environment. Statistics are largely taken from US studies and show that 80 percent of cyber relationships talk about sex and 20 percent actually result in cyber-sex.

CSR Initiatives

Filtering and content rating systems have been developed to limit who can view abusive images available through technology. Such systems are limited to curtailing the receipt of abusive images and do little to stop the creation or dissemination of harmful images. Further, such systems can be challenged as limiting freedom of speech. However, in 2001, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *R v Sharpe* that the child pornography provisions of the Criminal Code are a valid limitation of the right to freedom of expression under Section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

“Walled gardens” are an additional means to try to limit access to harmful websites. These are collections of websites that are preapproved to be appropriate for children. One downfall of this strategy is that the material could be screened to favour a particular ideology or philosophy and therefore limit the ideas that children are exposed to.

Worldwide, a Virtual Global Taskforce has been initiated to bring law enforcement agencies together to fight child abuse images online. The Internet Governance Forum has also brought together the Dynamic Coalition on Online Child Safety. The aim of this coalition is to create a permanent, open platform for discussion on issues related to child

online safety, ensuring dialogue among representatives from children's organizations, government, industry, academia and other civil society groups.

ISP Responsibilities

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are increasingly being called on to play an active role in preventing the dissemination of harmful images of children through technology. Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada believes that ISPs have both a moral and legal responsibility to do so.

Bill C-22 (Mandatory Reporting of Internet Child Pornography by Persons Who Provide an Internet Service) came into force in December 2011. Those falling within the Act now have certain statutory obligations to report online child pornography.

Two main requirements of Bill C-22 are as follows:

1. ISPs are now required to report websites containing child pornography
2. ISPs must tell police if they believe a child pornography offense has been committed using their service.

All of Canada's major ISPs already voluntarily report child pornography. The Act codifies industry practice among the major service providers and requires smaller providers to follow these practices.

Bill C-30 (Protecting Children from Internet Predators Act) was introduced to Parliament in February 2012. It would have required ISPs and mobile phone companies to hand over basic subscriber information to law enforcement without a warrant. The proposed legislation was scrapped after it faced harsh criticism of being overly broad and lacking accountability. Bill C-55 (An Act to Amend the Criminal Code) was instead implemented in March 2013 and allows for the police to intercept private communications without a warrant in very specific circumstances. ISP cooperation would be required in some of these situations.

In May 2013, a cyber-bullying forum attended by the Prime Minister, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and other interested parties was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The notion of engaging ISP help in combatting online abuse and exploitation was brought up, but it is too soon to determine what might come of that discussion.

Sources

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