Building Trust - Why Educational Institutions' Focus on Privacy is Important

Have you heard the phrase "chronically online"? We live in an exciting digital world with constant access to the Internet. We can use our faces to unlock our phones, purchase essential items recommended to us based on our browsing histories and social media feeds, find nearby restaurants using our precise geolocation, and even interact with AI chatbots that sound nearly human.

While this technology helps improve the quality of our lives, there is a trade-off — it relies on consumer personal information to function and improve. It's important that this data is collected, processed, and stored in sustainable, safe ways, especially because data breaches are on the rise; leaked information can cause significant harm to individuals.

To mitigate these risks, educational institutions can focus on privacy in various aspects to help foster a culture of privacy literacy among students and faculty.

Privacy laws like the Colorado Privacy Act (CPA) also provide guidelines to help these institutions build trust and pave the way for creating a safer, more sustainable Internet.

What is Data Privacy, and Why is it Important?

Data privacy refers to the concept of keeping people's personal information *private*.

The websites we visit and the apps we download collect our personal information for various reasons. It helps enhance the user experience, improve products and services, and lead to more personalized browsing experiences.

Focusing on data privacy is essential because it helps strike a proper balance between using personal information to develop goods, services, and technologies we all benefit from and ensuring individuals still have adequate, ethical rights and controls over their data.

According to recent data privacy statistics, consumers believe more must be done to protect personal data, and organizations should be more transparent about their processing activities.

88% of users say their willingness to share personal data depends on how much they trust a company. (PwC)

There is a bipartisan desire for comprehensive privacy laws in the U.S., and Colorado is one of the states leading this charge, thanks to the implementation of the Colorado Privacy Act.

Overview of the Colorado Privacy Act

The CPA is unique because it applies to nonprofits and other nontraditional entities, including some private and for-profit colleges and universities — most other privacy laws at the U.S. state level exempt nonprofits and educational institutions.

Specifically, the CPA applies to any entity that conducts business in Colorado or produces or delivers commercial products or services intentionally targeted to Colorado residents and meets one of the following thresholds:

- Controls or processes the personal data of 100,000 consumers during a calendar year **and/or**
- Controls or processes the personal data of 25,000 consumers and derives revenue or receives a discount on the price of goods or services from selling personal data.

This means that Colorado residents have the following rights over their data:

- Know if an entity is collecting their data
- Access the personal data collected about them
- Delete their data
- Obtain a portable copy of their data
- Opt out of the sale of their data
- Opt out of having their data processed for targeted advertising
- Opt out of certain types of profiling

In addition, covered entities cannot collect or process categories of sensitive personal information from Colorado residents without their express, affirmative, informed consent.

There are exceptions to the CPA, including but not limited to certain data protected by other privacy laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and the Gramm Leach Bliley Act.

Why Data Privacy is Important for Your Future

As a result of the introduction of laws like the CPA, more and more entities collect personal data responsibly.

They're transparent about what they collect and use in their privacy policies. They give users control over whether their data is processed using cookie consent banners, and they implement technical and physical security measures to keep it safe.

According to a survey conducted by Termly, **78.1%** of businesses feel no negative impact from privacy requirements. If anything, implementing compliance solutions helps them thrive.

Overall, individuals feel like they can trust more entities online to handle their information respectfully, and these efforts make it more difficult for cybercriminals and other bad actors to successfully hack into databases and steal precious personal information.

Growing Privacy Careers

As the acting Director of Global Privacy for Termly, I can confidently say that, in addition to the increase in overall privacy protections, the data privacy industry has also introduced several career paths that are growing exponentially.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the career of Information Security Analysts has a projected employment growth of **33%** from now to 2033.

Institutions of higher education like the University of Denver can help create pathways for students to enter these growing fields that include Data Privacy Attorneys, Data Protection Officers, Chief Privacy Officers, and various cybersecurity experts.

But, because personal data is collected and used in nearly every industry, understanding data privacy, privacy laws, and best practices is relevant even in more traditional careers.

Developing privacy literacy is necessary for everyone entering the workforce. The educational institutions prioritizing this will stand out and create better-prepared future world leaders.

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