

GUARDING ONLINE PRIVACY: PRIVACY SEALS AND GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of the Internet as a business medium has exacerbated violation of individual privacy. New e-business technologies have increased the ability of online merchants to collect, monitor, target, profile, and even sell personal information about consumers to third parties. Governments, business houses and employers collect data and monitor people, but their practices often threaten an individual's privacy. Because vast amount of data can be collected on the Internet and due to global ramifications, citizens worldwide have expressed concerns over increasing cases of privacy violations. Several privacy groups, all around the world, have joined hands to give a boost to privacy movement. Consumer privacy, therefore, has attracted the widespread attention of regulators across the globe. With the European Directive already in force, "trust seals" and "government regulations" are the two leading forces pushing for more privacy disclosures. Of course, privacy laws vary throughout the globe but, unfortunately, it has turned out to be the subject of legal contention between the European Union and the United States. The EU has adopted very strict laws to protect its citizens' privacy, in sharp contrast, to 'lax-attitude' and 'self-regulated' law of the US. For corporations that collect and use personal information, now ignoring privacy legislative and regulatory warning signs can prove to be a costly mistake. An attempt has been made in this paper to summarize the privacy legislation prevalent in Australia, Canada, the US, the EU, India and Japan. It is expected that a growing number of countries will adopt privacy laws to foster e-commerce.

KEYWORDS: *Guarding, Online Privacy, Trust Seals, Government Regulation, Australia, USA, EU, Canada, Japan, India, Technology-Based Solutions.*

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