

MEDIA RELEASE

Social media risk management on life support

Social Media Risk Survey of Australian healthcare organisations

Sydney, January 2014 – With 65 percent of Australian healthcare organisations using, or planning to use, social media it is a concern that a staggering 89.5 per cent of organisations said that evaluating and auditing social media risk was not part of their organisation’s audit plan.

In a new Australian survey, *Social Media in Healthcare*, by global consulting firm Protiviti, 40 per cent of respondents from both private and public healthcare organisations have no framework or social media policy in place and only 20 percent of them feel they have a good or robust strategic media framework.

Indeed 30 percent of the respondents to the firm’s survey who use social media do not address social media risk at all in their risk assessment process.

“Social media risk is becoming one of the most significant reputational risks of our time,” said Protiviti managing director Mr Mark Harrison. “The potential damage for a company’s reputation is high risk as anyone, any time, can publish any material for the whole world to see. This could be particularly detrimental in the healthcare sector as the unfortunate release of private information would have a significant impact on doctor patient relations and healthcare organisations generally.

“There is no doubt that as healthcare organisations continue to adopt this platform for internal and external communication, the risk analysis and management of social media needs to be stepped up.

“There is recognition that social media policies and procedures are needed, but they haven’t ‘quite got to the top of the list’, particularly in public sector healthcare organisations which are grappling with far reaching reforms including those relating to funding and primary care.

“Nor is it unreasonable to predict that the increasing use of technology including eHR and TeleHealth will drive increasing use of social media,” Mr Harrison added.

Interestingly, the *Social Media in Healthcare* study also found that Marketing/PR and Corporate communications employees tend to hold the primary responsibility for monitoring and managing the company’s social media risk exposure at almost half of the healthcare organisations surveyed (45 percent) with risk management and executive management following far behind at 15 percent and the audit committee with 5 per cent allowing for 10 per cent of organisations who don’t know clearly who holds this responsibility.

“These statistics are particularly disturbing,” Mr Harrison said. “Social media poses significant risks for virtually every organisation and responsibility must lie with senior management. “Social media is here to stay and as the technologies become faster and potentially more invasive, the risks will become greater and mitigation strategies should be fully integrated to every risk management plan and procedure.

“But the news is not all bad,” Mr Harrison added. “Compared to the findings of a similar survey conducted by Protiviti in the United States, while Australia has some catching up to do in terms of having a social media strategy in place (60 per cent in the US compared to our 40 per cent) we are ahead of the game in terms of looking at potential risks posed by social media. In fact 70 per cent of Australian respondents indicated they address social media in their risk management processes compared to just 51 per cent of respondents in the US.”

Australian respondents also believe the biggest potential social media risks are in relation to brand and reputational damage, loss of intellectual property and employee defamation.

In addition, thirty five per cent of those surveyed indicated their social media networks were partially accessible, 15 per cent were moderately accessible and 25 per cent fully accessible.

Of the organisations surveyed, 5 per cent use it for internal communications, 25 per cent for external communication and 20 per cent use for both. 15 per cent don't use currently but are planning to in the next 12 months and 35 per cent are not considering implementing.

-ENDS-

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Note to editors

Attached is a synopsis of *Social Media Research for the Healthcare Industry in Australia* complete with a comparison of the Australia and United States results.

About Protiviti

Protiviti (www.protiviti.com.au) is a global consulting firm that helps companies solve problems in finance, technology, operations, governance, risk and internal audit. Through its network of more than 70 offices in over 20 countries, Protiviti has served more than 35 percent of FORTUNE 1000® and FORTUNE Global 500® companies. The firm also works with smaller, growing companies, including those looking to go public, as well as with government agencies.

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