



Compliance

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2015–2016 SCCE/HCCA Board President
Partner, King & Spalding

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by Roy Snell, CHC, CCEP-F

Forced transparency — A tipping point

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Transparency can be a cultural or a personal trait. Some cultures are more transparent than others. Some people are more transparent than others. Transparency is a personal trait/skill that can be mastered. Personal transparency can bring comfort to those who master it. Withholding information can be a burden. Those who say, "This is who I am, what I believe, and how I behave," can be more comfortable in their own skin. Those who are not transparent carry a burden with them at all times. They have to have their guard up at all times and can be very concerned that their secrets might get out. Some personal information should be held close to the vest, but withholding too much information can be an unreasonable burden.



Snell

Transparency as a cultural issue is a different matter. There is great debate about how transparent businesses and governments should be. Transparency, taken to extreme, can bump into privacy concerns. Some believe organizations should share more information to expose things deemed unhealthy or inappropriate. Society is pushing hard for more transparency in government and business. Groups like Transparency International are making progress, but after 20 years of

effort their progress is painstakingly slow. However, we have now come to a tipping point. Cultural transparency will never be the same.

Sony, a Panamanian law firm, and a political entity had their information stolen and distributed on the Internet for all to see. Why? People who took the information believe that society should be more transparent. I do not condone nor support private information being stolen and distributed. My point is simply that no one will ever write emails the same way they have in the past. They will write documents with the prospect that the document might be leaked.

Some personal information should be held close to the vest, but withholding too much information can be an unreasonable burden.

Some people believe they can switch to some other more secure way to communicate, or that they can protect their information. However, given recent events, most people will change the way they behave. Many people will not write anything they don't want exposed on the Internet. Things will never be the same as a result of forced transparency. This is a tipping point and given the likelihood of continued incidents, the change will be rapid. 📍