

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Student's Name

Name of Institution:

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

PII is a widely accepted concept used in the protection of information. Under this concept, information is synchronized in such a way that it can be utilized to uniquely and effectively offer the recognition of a person, a contact or provision of a locus on location of the particular person at a particular moment in time. This PPI can be used independently or can be spiced with other sources to allow a unique identification of a particular individual. Sometimes, the interaction and possible integration of PII with information technology may bring about issues of ethics in its usage. Information about a person is collected with the help of technology, filtered and stored (Rouse 2008).

Forms and sources of PII

PII¹ is available in a number of forms. Some of these forms are discussed in the ensuing sentences. The common and main forms are names of a person, drawn from the identity cards issued by the government, the birth certificates, the passports, driver's license or any other legal document bearing the person's name, fingerprints collected either at a voting station, when caught in a criminal activity.

PII is also collected in the process of applying for a passport, biometric data such as the DNA, retinas and irises of the eyes, voice patterns and chords, facial patterns, nose, jaw bones and even measurements of hand, information from email addresses owned by a person, telephone numbers and lines as well as the social security numbers. Others are credit card numbers, genetic data, vehicle registration numbers, and place of birth among many others.

¹PII is also linked to Personally identifiable financial information (PIFI) which is any type of PII that is linked to that person's finances.

²Pentagon is the defense body of USA that makes policies and laws concerning defense in the country

Uses of PII

PII is used largely by law enforcement officers in a bid to identify and trace persons who have been accused of committing a crime. PII is instrumental in providing full details about a specific person and psychiatrists and psychologists employ this concept in a large scale because the scope of their work requires them to identify the dynamics revolving around their person of interest.

Threat and risk faced by PII

PII can become a potential hub and target for cyber space criminals. The mixture of information technology has resulted into the birth of an irresistible avenue for cyberspace crimes. The development and advancement of internet has led to the ease of collection of information from individuals and corporates who sometimes don't even have the vaguest idea that information could be siphoned from them.

According to McCallister et al (2010), information has been one of the most potent weapons against human beings in the world. He who has access to information other people do not have has control over those people.

PII can be utilized in a variety of ways by persons with ulterior motives, often resulting into adverse effects. For example, criminals may steal the identity of a particular person, alter it or even utilize it for ulterior motives. PII may be used to plan for criminal activities, robberies and even murders.

The information is collected from the internet through breaches and sidestepping firewalls, internet guards and internet security. With the advancement of technology and the

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continued popularity and increased reliance on internet by people all over the globe, the internet has made it easy for cyber space criminals to collect information about different people with ease. Pentagon² (2006), stipulates that most times, these tech savvy and very skills criminals hack into the websites of their victims from remote sites and retrieve important and private information. They then either sell this information to third parties or decide to blackmail the owners, often for exorbitant amounts of money.

PII and the protection of privacy

With such wealth of information being present in such a crooked world, people with ulterior motives will always try to use this information to their personal benefit, often bring harm to others. This desire of protection of privacy has led to emerging issues in many companies where PII is used in large scale. The protection of information has become one of the major challenges of major companies in the world today.

Companies vow to keep the information about their clients safe and they have very strict policies that prevent them from disclosing any information to third parties. For example, hospitals use codes instead of names to identify their patients and this ensures their parents are protected from snooping third parties.

The governments of countries across the globe have come up with privacy acts and regulations that limit the usage of PII among its agencies. According to Narayanan and Shmatikov (2010), the information about a person, maybe a suspect, is only released to the right party only through a number of protocols. Very often, the agencies involved in provision and

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protection of our security also employ the use of codenames and passwords when referring to particular cases.

Trends in PII

The breakthroughs and advances in forensic science and technology have led to the collection of PII in a faster and easier way from scenes of crime. Criminals are also matching up to this trend by utilizing measures to avoid getting caught. Such measures are wearing facial masks, sunglasses to cover their retina, wigs, clothing to cover markings in their body such as tattoos and even gloves to hide their finger prints.

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