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LINKING THEORY & PRACTICE

Leadership and Awareness as Key Issues in Information Security Management

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In “Leadership and the Psychology of Awareness: Three Theoretical Approaches to Information Security Management,” Robert Holmberg and Mikael Sundström offer interesting and valuable insights on the way information security management would benefit from studies that examine the social, psychological, and organizational mechanisms that can generate employee awareness. Arguably, managing awareness of information security is a growing task for managers because organizations in which information systems are implemented contain increasingly nonbureaucratic elements and become more and more networked. In such organizational forms the traditional information security techniques and models fall short. Innovative, boundary-crossing approaches are needed to overcome problems with mechanistic safety guidelines in information security management.

What makes this article in particular interesting to *OMJ* readers is that the authors offer a layered approach to information security management. As they argue, awareness is needed at the micro level of the individual employee (cognition and behavior:

mindfulness), but equally important are the meso level (learning communities) and the macro level (organization-wide systems design) of the organization. The authors prove this framework to be useful by applying it to an in-depth empirical study. This part of the article reveals, among other things, that in more complex, networked organizations, traditional information security management models are less useful indeed. Instead, information security managers must operate on all three levels of the organization simultaneously in order to successfully facilitate the implementation of information security rules. Skilled leadership in this respect is not just about the implementation of these rules, but about the development of a layered, organizational policy in which employee awareness of information security can prosper.

This article has much to offer to readers who are interested in information systems management. The authors transcend traditional notions of security and security awareness and help both scholars and managers to better understand these issues in the context of information systems management.

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