

# Employees Breaching Privacy At Work

written by vickyp | November 4, 2013



*Your employees likely see privacy violations regularly, but odds are that they aren't telling you.*

Despite a significant number of Canadians sharing details of their lives on Facebook, confidentiality and privacy are highly valued by most Canadians.

Maintaining privacy means keeping client or customer information private and avoiding the misuse of confidential and proprietary information. Within the Canadian workplace there are normally high expectation for maintaining confidentiality. Many Canadian organizations require employees to sign confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements as part of their employment contracts.

## **Privacy Breaches At Work**

According to a recent survey conducted by Ipsos Ried on behalf of ClearView Strategic Partners Inc. the confidential information organizations collect and store is not always safe in the hands all employees. In the study on workplace ethics, respondents were asked about ethical breaches they had observed at work. One of the specific questions asked was related to employee's observations of privacy breaches in the workplace. Across the country an average of 17% of employees indicated they had personally observed the misuse of private information by colleagues in the workplace.



## **Almost Half Never Report Privacy Breach Misconduct**

Although 62% of those surveyed indicated they felt personal pressure to report the violations, almost half (46%) indicated that had no confidence in their manager taking action and only 32% felt that senior company managers would take any action. Consequently 48% of workers who witness misconduct will never report it. Moreover, among the 17% who witnessed breach of privacy violations only 16% indicated that they reported the breach. That means that breaches of privacy are almost never reported. Providing workers with anonymous ways to report privacy violations may help, but it's not a solution. Only 28% indicated that having an anonymous way to report would

encourage them to actually do so.

Take the time to develop clear policies about what constitutes a breach of confidentiality and ensure that all employees understand and have agreed to abide by these policies. Sometimes these breaches occur as a result of a failure to understand what constitutes breach of confidentiality. Educating your employees about the cost of privacy violations, the cost to your organization in possible litigation, bad press and loss of business may be one way to help increase the reporting of privacy violations.

Sources:

[Four in Ten \(42%\) Employed Canadians Have Observed Some Form Of Workplace Misconduct; One in Five \(17%\) Cite Witnessing Privacy Violations](#)

[Privacy Legislation in Canada](#) and the [Privacy Act](#)