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Web-based Teaching and Training Panels

Who Can You Trust in Cyberspace? Let Us Show You the Ways!

Co-chairs: **Kathryn Brohman** and **Helen Kelley**, Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario

Panelists: **Donald Cameron**, Smith Lyons Barristers and Solicitors
Paul Atkinson, Chief Executive Officer, Solect
Duncan Copeland, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University School of Business

Abstract
Risk associated with electronic commerce adoption may be reduced through the development of a trustful relationship between transaction partners. The purpose of this panel is to identify potential trust mediums in electronic commerce and debate their potential effectiveness.

Introduction

The popular press has been inundated with articles that encourage consumers and retailers to jump on the "electronic commerce" bandwagon. Contrary to the hype, recent business news publications strongly assert that Internet shopping is clearly "stuck in the starting blocks." Industry has invested heavily in developing innovations to address the financial and network risks associated with Internet shopping. However, risks associated with the authenticity and integrity of transaction partners have received painfully little attention by both the academic and business communities.

Marketing theory posits that the risk of authentication and integrity can be reduced with the development of trustful relationships between transaction partners. The purpose of this panel is to bring to the forefront competing trust mediums that may serve as vehicles to minimize risk, and to debate their potential effectiveness.

Industry literature introduces four mediums of trust that are relevant to electronic commerce: (1) seal of assurance, (2) accreditation, (3) digital certificates, and (4) "digital gatekeepers." Seal of assurance and accreditation are authoritative certificates provided by professional third parties (e.g., CPAs) and industry associations, respectively. A digital certificate is a web version of a letter of credit and introduction that is directly provided from the buyer to the seller. A "digital gatekeeper" is a middle entity that verifies the authenticity and integrity of the transaction partners (i.e., Internet Providers).

Panelists

Donald Cameron is a practicing lawyer who specializes in intellectual property litigation, licensing, and information technology law. He is widely published, and is frequently invited to speak to a variety of Canadian and American legal associations. Donald is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto.

Paul Atkinson is a successful and well respected business strategist in the global IT industry. Solect is a world leader in the development of end-to-end software solutions and professional services for service providers. Solect has affiliations with Cisco Systems, Bellcore, Sun Microsystems, and Nokia.

Dr. Duncan Copeland is affiliated with Georgetown University and President of Copeland & Company, a Washington D.C. based international consultancy that provides information counsel to management. Duncan has published in top-tier IS journals, and is a highly respected speaker who regularly presents IS management best practice at industry events/seminars.

Discussion

The co-chairs of the panel will open the discussion by introducing the role of trust in relationship marketing research. It is the contention of two panel members, Donald Cameron and Paul Atkinson, that a formal trust medium needs to exist to promote a surge in electronic commerce activity. These two panelists have conflicting views on what the ideal medium of trust will be and will make dynamic arguments to support their perspectives. The third panelist will dispute the need for middle players for establishing trust relationships among the players involved in electronic commerce transactions.

Given all the panelists' wealth of knowledge and industry experience, this discussion will be thought provoking, and generate tentative solutions for electronic commerce adoption that will introduce new perspectives and opportunities for IS researchers.