Safety in numbers

Cybersecurity could help promote the sharing of data for the public good, say Brunswick's MARIA FIGUEROA KÜPÇÜ and DAVID BROWN

CEOs may lie awake at night worrying about how to protect sensitive data. But some are also wondering if their data might contain answers to some of the world's most pressing problems.

Public expectations are growing for companies to be more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. At the same time, the collection and analysis of data is increasingly fundamental to doing business in most sectors. Together with powerful recent advancements in technology, these pressures have opened a new frontier on the cybersecurity landscape, where the need to share data for the greater good must be balanced against the need to keep it safe.

"Data-driven insight offers an exciting opportunity to solve environmental and social challenges," says David Braunstein, Industry Solutions Innovation Lead, Global Business Services, IBM.

Data analysis technology is already being used to produce positive results for society, but relies on the sharing of data. Because of cybersecurity concerns, corporations are wary. A top priority for most is reassuring customers and stakeholders that their data is safe. Sharing data with outside organizations sits uneasily alongside that goal.

Every business that holds sensitive data faces this dilemma: reconciling the unease that stakeholders feel about cybersecurity with the results that can be achieved when data is used for the greater good – often for the benefit of those same stakeholders. But if the obstacles are large, the potential benefits for society are too big to ignore, and many companies are responding.

As they adopt more mature, confident cybersecurity policies, businesses should find they are able to share information more easily with like-minded companies, and discuss the best ways to use this precious resource to benefit themselves and their communities. That conversation can also help companies sharpen their thinking about the balance of security and transparency.

One coalition of global companies, Together for Safer Roads (TSR), hopes to demonstrate the benefits of companies pooling data for the greater good. The group formed to tackle growing, but largely preventable, traffic crash deaths and injuries – a problem identified by the United Nations as "a major health and development concern" in 2016. The private sector group's founding members include AIG, Anheuser-Busch InBev, AT&T, Chevron, Ericsson, Facebook, GM, IBM, iHeartMedia, Octo Telematics, PepsiCo, Republic Services, Ryder, UPS and Walmart.

"We accept traffic fatalities as inevitable because they're so common, but there's more that business can do to prevent them and save lives," says Scott Ratzan, Vice-President of Global Corporate Affairs at AB InBev and Governing Board Member of TSR. "Road safety is a business issue because it impacts our employees and their families, our operations and communities."

8. WATSON (THE NEXT LINE OF DEFENSE?)

Watson, the artificial intelligence technology developed by IBM (above), analyzes massive amounts of "unstructured" data – such as the blogs, videos, white papers, research reports and alerts that make up about 80 percent of the internet – to learn about and solve complex problems. Its huge brainpower has previously been applied to subjects ranging from healthcare to education and now, in partnership with eight universities, Watson will tackle cybersecurity. Once up to speed, it will interpret and bring context to this data and provide insights and recommendations to all levels of the cybersecurity industry, from novice analysts to the most advanced experts. "We're not going to stop the bad guys," says IBM's Charles Palmer, "but now we have a new lever to keep up … and maybe get ahead of them."

BUSINESS & SOCIETY

The World Health Organization estimates that 1.25 million people are killed in crashes each year – a rate of more than two per minute – and up to 50 million are injured in collisions. Motorized traffic is increasing with population growth and urbanization. If current trends continue, by 2030 crashes will be ranked seventh as a cause of death globally, up from ninth position now.

Crash injuries disproportionately impact young people and those in developing countries. In addition to human suffering, traffic crashes can cost between 1 and 1.5 percent of a country's GDP. For some economies, those losses exceed the amount received in development aid.

To tackle the problem, the UN proposes improvements to road design and repairs; safety features on vehicles; changing driver behavior through policing and public information campaigns; improved care for victims; and better public transportation. The UN *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety* outlines its goal "to stabilize and then reduce the forecast level of road traffic fatalities around the world" by 2020.

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"The private sector can bring innovation and scale to proven strategies that will help to achieve the goals of improving traffic safety outlined by the UN," Ratzan says.

Public-private partnerships involving data and technology are already reshaping societies around the world. In Brazil, "intelligent" transportation systems are being launched, while IBM's "Smarter Cities" initiative is working with the government of Vizag, India, a city plagued by cyclones and floods, to improve emergency response efforts. A large Smart City program in Barcelona is redefining its public services, using data to improve quality of life for its citizens.

That trend to use data to improve society sets a precedent for TSR member companies, many of which have data that would be helpful to share. AB InBev and UPS, for instance, have first-hand knowledge of road conditions from large fleets of delivery vehicles. AT&T has aggregated data that it has used in its "It Can Wait" initiative, a social media campaign to curb the dangerous practice of texting and driving. IBM, which owns The Weather Channel, has extensive meteorological data. And AIG has broad insights gained from decades of insurance claims across its global network.

"We pay out about $130 million each work day in claims, from very small to very large, and we learn something from every one," says Rob Schimek, Executive Vice-President and CEO, Commercial, AIG.

TSR is optimistic, but cautious about finding ways to combine such knowledge to potentially save lives. Member companies are stewards of sensitive and proprietary data and each data source has its own cybersecurity issues of privacy and risk. Technical issues that would allow the data to be accessible on multiple platforms may also need to be addressed. However, Braunstein sees more companies willing to explore the possibilities.

"Now we have the data analytics capabilities," he says. "There are some near-term gains we can already see. Bringing together or even blending cross-sector approaches will take time – but we're very excited to try."

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9. PANAMA PAPERS (PRIVATE TO PUBLIC)

In an audacious leak that revealed the offshore bank accounts of business figures, celebrities and world leaders, more than 11.5 million documents held by Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca were divulged to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in early 2016. The documents – roughly 10 million more than were revealed by Edward Snowden – are still being reviewed, but have already made an impact. Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson stepped down after his holdings were published, while some of the world's largest banks are being investigated. The source of the leak has used encryption to remain anonymous.