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Deloitte comments on Ofcom's announcement on social networking

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Christy Kulasingam, media director at Deloitte, comments on today's announcement by Ofcom on social networking.

"There is growing resistance and concern to the volume and depth of information that websites are capturing about consumers' online behaviour, as demonstrated by today's warning by Ofcom about the dangers of children publishing personal details on social networking sites. While Britain's children are new media aware, they're not always new media savvy.

"Web users should be made aware that even seemingly innocuous activities, such as social networking, may be compromising and potentially dangerous.

"Possibly the most important action for online companies is to educate users on online privacy, in a clear manner that neither trivialises nor exaggerates the way in which data is used. For children this could perhaps be using webcasts or cartoon-based educational videos which schools could show. Online companies should also consider offering more privacy functionality (i.e. granular controls, opt-in vs. opt-out mechanisms), with surfers having the autonomy to select the level of privacy that they would prefer.

"Social networking companies should also consider taking a proactive stance to acknowledge their duty of care, for example by creating a voluntary code of conduct to avoid the potential for onerous (and costly) regulatory remedies."

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