

Technology Industry

While it is helpful for us to understand what we can do to protect our children, the burden of protecting children from pornography flowing into our homes, schools, and libraries does not rest entirely with parents and those who supervise children. There are at least three areas where the technology industry needs to bear the burden for safety on the Internet:

- Industry leaders must increasingly adopt family-friendly corporate policy.
- Industry leaders need to implement technological solutions at the server level, such as filtered services or parental controls.
- Industry leaders must comply with existing laws.

The new technologies being developed will allow providers to offer their wares to selected audiences, support more reliable ways of screening out unwanted customers, and revoke subscription privileges of customers who don't abide by provider policies.

You may be thinking, *So what's my role?* Remember, the Internet industry is a business. Market demand drives business, and as there is increasing demand for safe and clean Internet access, the Internet industry will respond by supplying safe solutions.

You can also play a vital and important role by holding your Internet service provider or online service provider accountable to their commitment to family-friendly corporate policy. And if your existing ISP or OSP does not have family-friendly policies, you may want to take your business elsewhere. What constitutes family-friendly policy? The following is a partial list:

- Provision of either server-based filtered service, end-user software solutions (preferably free of charge to subscribers), or parental controls.
- Compliance with existing cyberporn laws (i.e., removal of illegal pornography, child pornography, and obscenity from their own proprietary service and USENET newsgroups that offer such material).
- Segregation of adult content from children or no access to adult content. This type of policy conveys an additional layer of corporate commitment to families.
- Response in a timely fashion to your concerns and complaints.
- Cooperation with law enforcement in working toward a safe Internet.

As Enough Is Enough's representative on the steering committee for the 1997 Internet Online Summit: Focus on Children, I developed a comprehensive ISP pledge to children, which was later condensed to the following proposed ethics code. This was submitted to the ISP/Law Enforcement Committee working on the Summit. Though it was not adopted, due to the many complex issues surrounding vast sign-off by national associations representing the ISP community, the goal of family-friendly corporate policy regarding online safety is continuing to be encouraged at the national level.

Suggested Code of Ethical Conduct for ISPs and OSPs

1. We will adopt terms-of-service policies:
 - forbidding the use of our service to post child pornography or hard-core pornography, or to

make sexual or other improper solicitation of children;

- stating that we will promptly address violations of these policies;
- stating that we reserve the right to take action in good faith to restrict availability of material that we consider to be obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected.

2. We will remove illegal material hosted on our own system when advised of its presence.

3. We will not subscribe to newsgroups (or bulletin boards or other forums) in which illegal activity occurs, including the posting of child pornography or hard-core pornography or sexual or other improper solicitations to children.

4. We will enable or offer server-level filtering of illegal material

OR

We will offer parental controls as the default setting for access by a minor under age seventeen, which default can be disabled by the master account holder.

5. We will cooperate with local, state, federal, and international authorities in the investigation of crimes involving use of our service, to the extent practical and lawful, including the retention of user information and evidence for a reasonable time and the reporting of any suspected incidents of child abuse to the proper authorities.¹

At that same summit, Vice President Al Gore challenged the online industry to come up with ways to protect children's privacy, shield them from exploitative

marketing, and provide them with more safe places to go online. "Industry will never be able to meet [the need of America's families]," said Gore, "unless it devotes the same resources and commitment to designing parental controls that it would devote to the design and launch of any new product." Gore went on to announce that the leading Internet Service Provider Associations had made a new agreement to cooperate with law enforcement authorities on a zero-tolerance policy against child pornography. The zero-tolerance policy against child pornography emerged from this suggested code of ethical conduct. It's not everything I had envisioned, but it's a great start! Once again, you can make a difference by making sure that your ISP/OSP is adhering to the zero-tolerance policy and by encouraging your provider to adopt this or a similar code of ethical conduct in an effort to exercise corporate responsibility.

Law Enforcement/Law Makers

U.S. law enforcement has recently made protecting children in cyberspace a priority. The FBI has increased its staff related to combating computer-related exploitation of children by 50 percent in the past six months, and has established a task force that specializes in computer child pornography and solicitation cases. In addition, the Attorney General's Advisory Committee is providing training and information about the latest computer technology for law enforcement and prosecutors across the country.

Still, with the lack of enforcement of obscenity laws, it seems that the perpetrators, producers, and distributors of pornography (the individuals profiting the most) are the only ones who have not been required to bear any responsibility or accountability under the law.