Public Confidence in Education Institutions' Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Capabilities Jumps in 2008

Public confidence in the abilities of the nations' education institutions to continue in operation during major emergencies and recover from disasters jumped in 2008. This finding came from a 2008 opinion survey released today by InfoSENTRY Services, Inc., a national information technology consulting firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The company's president, M. Glenn Newkirk, said, "While overall confidence in major U.S. institutions' abilities to prepare for disasters and continue operation after disasters remained broadly low, education institutions have seen a rise in overall public confidence in their abilities from a Net Score of 28% in 2006, to 29% in 2007, and to 37% in 2008. This jump was a statistically significant increase of nine points in our net confidence ratings. Overall, in our 2008 survey, education institutions' confidence scores remained lower than scores for hospitals and medical clinics, banks and financial institutions, and local governments, but higher than scores for large corporations, state governments, and the Federal government."

InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. contracted Opinion Research Corporation (ORC), a leading national opinion research company, to ask a random sample of US respondents who are 18 years old and over the following two questions in ORC's January CARAVAN® surveys in 2006, 2007, and 2008:

> "Now I am going to read you some types of organizations that have to deal with emergencies and disasters. As I read each one, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very low confidence and 5 means very high confidence, please tell me how confident you are that each organization can keep itself in operation during major emergencies or can recover from serious disasters. [ROTATE ITEMS]."

> "Now I am going to read you some types of organizations and governments. As I read each one, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very low confidence and 5 means very high confidence, please tell me how confident you are that the information in these organizations' computer systems is accurate and secure. [ROTATE ITEMS]"

In both instances, the interviewers read a list of institutions prepared by InfoSENTRY and ORC. Interviewers rotated the order in which they presented the institutions from interview to interview to eliminate potential bias from the order in which respondents heard the specific institutions.

Newkirk explained the process for computing the Net Scores, "By aggregating the positive confidence scores (4 and 5) and subtracting from them the negative confidence scores (1 and 2) on the 1 – 5 scale, we derived education institutions' Net Scores."

Figure 1 graphically presents summary results from the surveys in all three years.

Figure 1
Trends in Public Confidence in U.S. Education Institutions'
Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Capabilities
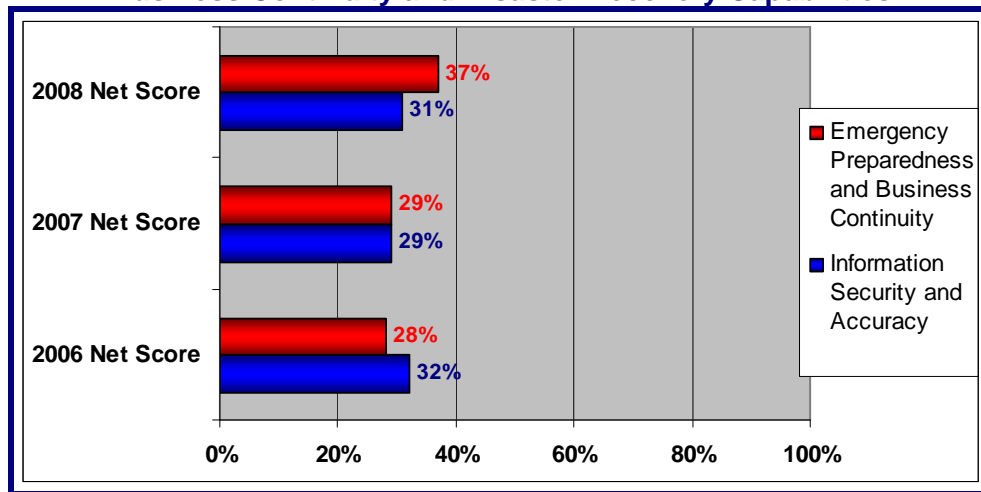
Newkirk continued with an analysis of the data trends. "The increase from a Net Score of 29% in 2007 to 37% in 2008 for the continuity and recovery capabilities was a result of the "positive" scores showing slight, statistically significant increases <u>and</u> the "negative" scores also showing statistically significant improvement. The data showed very few consistent, statistically significant variations across gender, income, household size, or number of children in the household."

"However, the data showed an interesting change in attitudes among respondents with different education backgrounds. In the three surveys, Net Scores for continuity and recovery capabilities for persons with at least some college education generally ranged from 26% to 34%. However, Net Scores for persons with only a high school education or incomplete high school education jumped from 27% to 43%, a statistically significant increase."

Newkirk noted another interesting finding for the continuity and recovery Net Scores. "Net Scores were significantly higher in some regions of the country than in others. In the South, the net confidence in education institutions' continuity and recovery capabilities was the highest of all regions in 2006 at 35%. By 2008, the South's net confidence in schools and colleges had jumped to 47%. Net Scores in the Northeast and North Central states were stable in 2008 at 28% and 37%, respectively, relatively unchanged from their scores in 2006 and 2007. In stark contrast, the Net Score for continuity and recovery capabilities in schools and colleges in the West were dismally low at 15% in 2006. The score climbed to only 25% in 2008."

Newkirk believes that the reason for the overall increase in confidence in education institutions' continuity and capability capabilities lies partially in the aftermath of both Hurricane Katrina and the Virginia Tech slayings. He stated, "After two very different tragedies that occurred within two years of each other, it is likely that people believe that schools and universities have taken steps to improve their ability to continue operations and recovery quickly in the face of such disasters. They hear about steps taken to return schools and colleges to operation in the Gulf Coast. They read how Virginia Tech has moved ahead and put new emergency plans in place. They hear from their own students and in their own communities about the changes that have occurred in education institutions in the past two years. That news simply has not spread with equal rapidity and evenness throughout all regions."

The survey results for confidence in information security and accuracy in education institutions paint a somewhat different picture than do the data for confidence in education institutions' continuity and recovery capabilities. Newkirk noted, "In terms of overall ranking of Net Scores for

confidence in information security, education institutions' scores of 32%, 29%, and 31% in the three measurement years still place them behind banks, financial institutions, hospitals, and medical clinics. However, they are ahead of large corporations and all other levels of government. That's the good news. The bad news is that the scores are statistically unchanged over the three surveys, showing no overall improvement. This statistical consistency was the case with all institutions covered in our surveys."

"Once again, we saw very little statistically significant variation in these information security Net Scores across gender, age, income, racial, education, and household size demographic groups. However, as before, we saw statistically significant differences in the Net Scores across the country's regions. The information security confidence scores in the Northeast were relatively static in the low-to-mid twenties. The Net Scores in the West were down in the low twenties and high teens, with a dismally low 18% in 2007. The North Central states saw a substantial drop in Net Scores from 40% to 25% between January 2007 and January 2008. On the spectrum's other end, the Net Scores for education institutions' information security confidence in the South started at 39% in 2006 and ended at 40% in 2008."

Newkirk continued, "It is likely that the lack of overall improvement in confidence in information security at schools and colleges and the variation among the regions were both tied to media reports of data breaches, losses, and thefts at institutions over the past couple of years such as Johns Hopkins, Carnegie Mellon, Yale, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, Villanova, University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, Western Illinois University, University of Michigan, University of Missouri, Ohio State University, Montana State, Metropolitan State College in Colorado, the University of New Mexico, University of California at Los Angeles, University of California--San Francisco, Texas A&M, Radford University, and the University of Virginia. There were also widely reported breaches of public school information systems by students just playing around or trying to change grades."

In conclusion, Newkirk stated, "Regardless of their veracity or severity, these reports will continue to weigh on public confidence in colleges' and universities' information security and accuracy. There are only two steps that education institutions can take to improve public confidence in their information security capabilities. They can make real improvements in their information security capabilities and they can carry out awareness activities in their communities. However, they cannot do the second step before they do the first. It simply will not work."

This report presents the findings of telephone surveys conducted among national probability samples of 1004 adults in January 2006, 1017 adults in January 2007, and 1018 adults in January 2008. All respondents were 18 years of age and older, living in private households in the continental United States. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage (±3%) points.

Interviewing for this Opinion Research Center CARAVAN® Survey was completed during the periods January 12 – 15, 2006, January 4 – 7, 2007, and January 4 – 7, 2008. Opinion Research Center is one of the best known and most established opinion research organizations in the United States.

InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. is an independent information technology services firm based in Raleigh, NC. The firm manages large systems projects, project assessments, quality assurance reviews, information systems security and business continuity projects, and system analyses for public and private sector clients throughout the United States and Europe. InfoSENTRY® has no financial relationships or business partnerships with hardware, software, or security product firms, allowing it a uniquely independent perspective to evaluate and manage information technology projects. InfoSENTRY® does not endorse any vendor's specific information technology services or products.

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