**Documentary/Focus Group Discussion Guide**Microsoft commissioned Pieros Research Consultancy (PRC) to conduct focus group research to examine consumer perceptions, awareness levels and concerns regarding online privacy and safety issues. The qualitative research engaged three audience segments, specifically: 1) 18 – 24 year olds, 2) parents and professionals in their mid-30s and 40s, and 3) Baby Boomers 60+ in Dallas, Texas and San Francisco, California.

Based on the focus group findings and documentary, the following outlines privacy themes and issues of importance. It may be helpful to review the documentary and pull out specific quotes to reference when speaking to a particular theme or segment.

**Identity Theft**

Identity theft was the most prevalent concern for all consumer segments and discussed on several occasions. Personal experience was not the primary driver of this concern, rather much of this concern stemmed from word of mouth or the media.

* Many participants had an unrealistic view of how much identity theft occurs online and perceived the threat to be more common than it really is.
* Participants demonstrated an awareness of phishing as a means of identity theft. As social engineering is on the rise, this will be a good topic to discuss and educate people on ways to avoid these scams.
* To help alleviate this concern you should discuss how people can avoid these threats and the need for consumer education.

Participant Soundbites:

“I’ve had my credit card stolen online and had a lot of purchase done on my card.”

“It’s hard getting help for it after you’ve been victimized.”

“My cousin got an email from his bank saying there’s been a problem with his account. So he logs on enters some personal numbers, he thinks it’s their Web site and it’s not.”

**Online Safety**

Child safety was a big concern for parents and several participants referenced child predators as a large threat to children online. Parents were cautious about disclosing personal information that could endanger their children.

* While online predators can be a threat to children, it is important to discuss other more common threats that children face such as cyberbullying or exposure to explicit content.
* It will be helpful to provide guidance on how parents can help their children stay safe online and what tools and resources are available through the many partnerships on this issue.

Participant Soundbites:

“I think there’s a big problem with children, using the Internet. [Predators, chat rooms.]”

**Social Networking**

Reputation management and the implications of sharing personal information through social networking sites was a concern for participants. However, most accepted responsibility for safeguarding their own information on these sites.

* Avid users, specifically the young adult segment, acknowledged the risks with social networking sites, but were aware of basic privacy features and commended social networks for these safeguards. However, they also mentioned the need for people to think about what they share.
* Older generations were not as familiar with social networks and therefore more concerned with the amount and types of information shared on these sites.
* It will be helpful to discuss what controls should be in place on social networks to help people manage who sees their information and what can be done to raise awareness of these controls.

Participant Soundbites:

“I’ve never even heard of MySpace until she showed it to me. [And kids put things on there that are pretty outrageous.]”

“A lot of kids that are 18, 19 get in trouble for putting all this crazy stuff on there and then they’re trying to look for a job and someone Facebooks them and there’s all this junk on there.”

“I’ve got everything set up on private.”

“So you have to send me a friend invite so nobody can just randomly look at my page.”

“People forget and they think they’re anonymous and they’re not.”

“If you think about how many millions and millions of people can access your information on there, why put something that could be detrimental to your future.”

**Online Advertising**

Attitudes toward online advertising varied among participants. While some viewed targeted advertisements as a nuisance, others found them informative and useful. Many people accepted the notion that online advertising is necessary for companies to provide free services, however, they did not seem to have a strong understanding of how online advertising works or how their information is used.

* Some participants were concerned about companies’ ability to track their activity to provide advertisements, while others thought that it was a fair trade for receiving free services.
* Many participants expressed the desire to have controls over what type of advertising they see and the ability to opt-out of targeted advertising.

Participant Soundbites:

**“**They will just continue to send you email after email after email.”

“I don’t know that they should be able to target me, but they do.”

“It’s sort of the cost of doing business. I’m asking for something for free, if I have to give them a little something, okay, it’s a fair trade.”

“I think more companies should announce up front if they’re going to share your information with advertisers, and give you an option to check the box or uncheck the box and say, I do not want this.”

**Notice & Consent**

The sharing or selling of personal information without consent was a top concern for participants. They feel their privacy is protected when they are assured that their personal information is secure and they have control over how it is used and with whom it is shared.

* All segments raised concerns related to unwanted advertisements and solicitations resulting from the distribution of personal information by Web sites they visit without consent.
* Participants suggested that people want to be notified about and consent to how companies use and share their personal information.
* It will be helpful to discuss how organizations can better provide consumers with notice about how their information is shared or used so they can make informed decisions. It might also be interesting to raise the question of whether this should be left up to each individual organization to decide, or whether there should be a common standard and format for communications.

Participant Soundbites:

“I’d like a choice on deciding whether or not I want that information on things that I might purchase. [Why?]Because I’m in control, I mean I can choose.”

**Responsibility & Accountability**

Generations differed on who they felt was most responsible for protecting online privacy. The young adults and Baby Boomers placed a strong emphasis on individual responsibility, while the parents and professionals were more likely to look to the government or company to provide privacy protections.

* This is a good opportunity to emphasize the need for collaboration from all parties involved with online privacy and safety.
* It will also provide a good opportunity to discuss if these groups are doing enough to help educate consumers and what more can be done to protect their privacy.

Participant Soundbites:

“Once you get in the Internet, I don’t think there’s any control.”

“I think the government.”

“Personally I think that most of us should take care of our own and we should be aware of what we need to do.”

“I think we should be as cautious as we can, but also the companies that we’re dealing with should protect the information.”

**Guidance & Education**

While participants were concerned about protecting online privacy, they typically had only a surface understanding of the threats they may face online. Although many said they take basic precautionary measures such as using spam filters or installing antivirus software, they did not truly understand the privacy decisions they made or the threats online.

* The need for education should be a key point of discussion. People need to be accurately aware of the threats they face, as well as the many benefits of life online.

Participant Soundbites:

“We’re aware of the risks and the safeguards to take, there are other people who maybe aren’t as aware.”

“My mother doesn’t even know how to check her own email. That just wasn’t her generation.”

**Trust & Credibility**

Most participants felt more comfortable sharing information with well known multinational organizations with strong brands. They looked for companies to provide strong security precautions such as multiple passwords, especially for financial transactions.

* Some participants had a misinformed opinion that an organization is reputable if it had a “professional” looking Web site.
* Again, you should emphasize the need for education on how consumers can identify legitimate online operators and protect themselves from online threats.

Participant Soundbites:

“[So what makes a particular site or institution or company trustworthy?] If the Web site’s secured or not secured.”

“One thing is, don’t put your information on a site that doesn’t start with ‘https’ [Why?] because it’s not secure.”

“For me, it’s all part of being established.”

“I find that I have more trust in a company when I have the option of opting out of their, or unsubscribing to them.

“I think it behooves the company to do that because they seem more reputable when they do that. Giving you a choice.”