Typically a corporate organization classifies the data as Company confidential, Private, Sensitive and public. Government agencies classify as public, confidential, secret and top secret. Data classification is subject to the domain it gets aligned to, but in nutshell, they both abide by the same data classifications constructs. Data that is usually classified as top secret or highly confidential is for a specific purpose so that it does not fall in some one's hand with criminal intent, who can then take undue advantage. For e.g. in the corporate world, every publicly listed company need to file an earnings report, this has to remain confidential till the official release date, if released earlier it could create havoc to company stock price. A lot of companies keep their product development plan and new features as highly confidential, this is primarily to safeguard their competitive advantage, any leak can cause long term financial loss. Apple, for example, is well known for its secretive product development, and so far it has paid a dividend to make it the most valuable company in the world. Apart from organizations need to keep a lot of data related to its employees as Private, this includes background reports, medical reports and keeping this information restrictive is beneficial to the employer as well as employees.

So till now, we have discussed how keeping information classified as secret or top secret benefits organizations. But there is another side effect of this phenomenon, typically the data classification for a government agency or an organization is done by a certain set of core people, now they could classify the information as top secret or secret for their own interest and limit data visibility so that they can carry out the acts which are for their own personal interest. A classic example is of all political donations made to a particular candidate by Super PACs or non-profits are kept confidential, even though there are laws to disclose the contributions, but they are loopholes in these laws which do not necessarily disclose each and every contribution. Now, these contributions could be to influence certain laws to be modified in such a way that it benefits a contributing person or organization. This is evident from the stances that the senator takes on common issues related to climate change, gun control, etc. Instead, if the laws are mode stricter to not keep campaign contribution as secretive and make it public, then voters can make a better choice. As far as the private sector is concerned, all the publicly traded companies create quarterly financial reporting statement, now process of creating the financial reporting is complex and most of the data related to it kept confidential, which results in manipulating and cooking up the numbers, this led to bigger fraud scams like Enron, WorldCom, which resulted in the laws like Sarbanes Oxley which protects whistle-blowers and avoids conflicts of interest and make CEO/CFO more accountable.

Another example that I need to cite over here is that of the disciplinary records of the police officer, various states across the US have varying rules for these records, 23 states (e.g. CA, MD, VA, etc.) have that as confidential, 15 states have limited (e.g. TX, MI, IL, etc.) and remaining 12 states are public (WA, FL, etc.). All these records should be public as the job of law enforcement is to protect society from criminals and communities have the right to know the policing job history of the person who is protecting them. Keeping these records as secret opens up the possibility for manipulations and wrongdoings.

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