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Cyber Security Top Tip 3

Staff education



It is often said that the human element is usually the weakest point for security. Indeed, from most of the stories we hear about and those we see in the media, there is a human element at the heart of the data breach or security issue.

We can be forgiven for thinking security is a technical issue but as the following examples show technology doesn't act on its own.

- An unencrypted memory stick being left in a taxi cab which has confidential data on it. These removable devices which can store significant volumes of data are readily available and easily lost!
- Websites which are poorly written allowing external attacks, such as SQL injection, giving the hacker full access to the backend databases to harvest personal data, or as we saw with Marks and Spencer recently, allowing access to another user's data
- Websites which are not configured to enforce encryption when handling sensitive data e.g. a log-on name and password
- Misspelling emails and sending confidential data to the wrong recipient
- Computer equipment which hasn't been securely wiped which is sold on to external parties allowing the recovery of data

All of these are real examples of where organisations and the individuals have got it wrong, some have had a significant impact and regulatory fines.

As an organisation, we can implement a control framework and invest in multiple technologies to help protect our networks and data, but if our staff continue to do the 'wrong' thing then all our efforts will be undone.

One of the biggest growing cybercrimes is ransomware. This involves the sending of an attachment with an email

crafted to try and trick the recipient into opening it; the consequences can be catastrophic, all your corporate data could be encrypted and held to ransom, hence the name. The only guaranteed way to prevent this is to ensure the attachment is never opened in the first place. In fact as an experiment I took one of these attachments and opened it within a safe environment, I had up to date anti-virus and a firewall enabled but the malware was still able to make multiple connections to servers around the world and start downloading further malicious software onto the PC.

So have you trained all your staff about the threats that you face? This shouldn't just be part of the induction process, after all who can truly remember what they were told on the first day of joining a new company? This should be a holistic process, repeated and backed up with regular messages, and especially actions from senior management, on why Cyber Security is important.

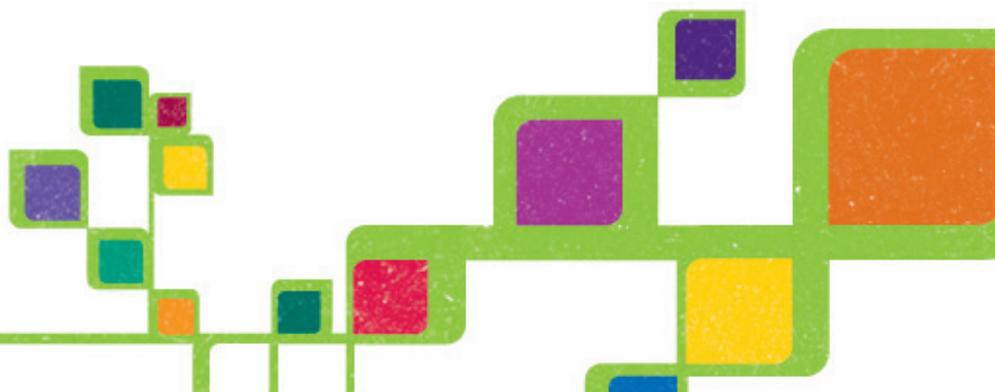
To make a real change we need to embed good security behaviours, let's not forget, effective Cyber Security is a journey not a destination.

Minimise the threat of cyber attacks to your organisation.

Call Matthew Parker for a consultation.



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