

Cybersecurity issues on the rise in global coronavirus pandemic

As organizations address the scourge of the COVID-19 global pandemic and attempt to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus by moving workforces to a completely remote model, another blight has appeared on the cybersecurity landscape. Cybercriminals and rogue nation-states are taking advantage of an expanded attack surface to perpetrate new attacks tied to health care and financial efforts.

Cyber attackers are mimicking communications from health organizations (WHO, HHS, CDC), government agencies (SSA, IRS, Medicare) and financial institutions (banks, credit unions). Hackers are using phishing (email) and vishing (phone) campaigns to create fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD) in an attempt to gain access to systems and sensitive data.

Organizations and their workers will need to devise a carefully considered approach to address security challenges proactively as we enter uncharted territory during this extraordinary event.

Phishing attacks

Since January, there have been numerous malicious email campaigns tied to COVID-19. Most recently, campaigns associated with stimulus checks from the United States government have been on the rise. To be clear: receiving a stimulus check does not require any signup. Any American who qualifies will automatically receive the funds. If you receive a call or email asking for personal data, banking information or money, STOP. It's a scam.

Legitimate organizations will never request sensitive information through email or over the phone.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury advises on its website: "If you receive calls, emails or other communications claiming to be from the Treasury Department and offering COVID-19 related grants or stimulus payments in exchange for personal financial information, or an advance fee, or charge of any kind, including the purchase of gift cards, please do not respond."

iV4 recommends delivery of supplemental security awareness training specific to protection against phishing campaigns, and general home security best practices are a priority while we are under an extreme remote worker situation.

The suggestions below are some considerations for companies and remote workers alike:

Businesses beware

As organizations recommend employees work remotely, there is increased use of mobile devices and remote access to core business systems. Proactive measures may enhance user experiences and security for remote access. Unprotected devices could lead to the loss of data, privacy breaches and systems held for ransom.

That said, here's a checklist for businesses to consider:

- Enable a consistent layer of multi-factor authentication (MFA) or deploy a step-up authentication procedure depending on the severity of access requests.
- Make sure your VPN configurations, policies and software/hardware are correctly configured and patched.
- Create a clear BYOD policy for access to corporate assets, which includes antivirus, patching, handling of sensitive information, etc.
- Ensure identity and access management fully processes secure third-party access to company networks.
- Have a comprehensive view of privileged identities within your IT environments, in-



VIEWPOINT

Michael Montagliano

cluding a procedure to detect, prevent or remove compromised accounts.

- Remind employees of the types of information they need to safeguard.
- Sensitive information, such as certain types of personal data that is stored on or sent to or from remote devices, should be encrypted in transit and at rest on the device and removable media used by the device (e.g., personnel records, medical records, financial records).
- Limit employee access to protected information to the minimum scope and duration needed to perform their duties.

All employees have a role

Not everyone is an "essential" employee, but it is essential that each and every employee plays a part in protecting their organization's data, privacy and infrastructure. These tips can provide guidance and recommendations, beginning immediately, for all remote workers.

- Do not share work computers and other devices. When employees bring work devices home, those devices should not be shared with or used by anyone else in the home to reduce the risk of unauthorized or inadvertent access to protected company information.
- Maintain security software on home devices and ensure all versions are up to date with all necessary patches.
- Turn off "remember password" functions when employees are logging into company information systems and applications from their devices.
- Limit browsing activity on the workstation you use to access company resources to reduce the risk of drive-by attacks and malware downloads.
- Hackers are breaching unsecured internet-connected home devices and inserting monitoring tools to capture credentials and information. Log into your WiFi router's management software to ensure it's running the latest firmware, which can update security flaws. And change the administrative password from the default setting to a strong password.

Like each of you reading this, iV4 is working around the clock for our teams, customers and community. We don't have a "typical work week" these days. If you have concerns about your company's data and infrastructure, you're not alone. As business owners and leaders, we also have to worry about the risks to—and health of—our operations during unprecedented times, in addition to the health and safety of our families, loved ones, employees and neighbors. What's important is that you protect today by taking these important steps and consideration, and plan ahead and pivot when needed. Because ready or not, this isn't close to being over.

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Sportscasters Stevens, Whetzel dealing with difficult, silent times

Shortly after answering the phone, Don Stevens excuses himself briefly so he can mute the television. The symbolism smacks me like a slapshot to the skull. For the first time in 34 hockey seasons, the booming voice of the Rochester Americans has been muted. The man known for his signature "He shoots! He scores!" call is now dealing with the sounds of silence, thanks to the COVID-19 global pandemic that has canceled games and just about everything else.

"If this is an example of what retirement is going to be like, I don't ever want to retire," 71-year-old Stevens says, trying to lighten the mood. "This is no fun at all."

The response is similar when I phone Josh Whetzel. Like Stevens, the voice of the Rochester Red Wings for the past 18 seasons is not enjoying life away from the announcer's booth. Whetzel, who also calls University at Buffalo men's basketball games, would much rather be sheltering in place at Frontier Field instead of home.

"Like everyone else, I'm completely avoiding being around people," he says. "Although I get it and agree with it 100%, social distancing stinks."

Yes, it does. And so does not being able to do what you've spent your entire adult life doing. Microphones and livelihoods have been unplugged as we battle this coronavirus scourge.

For Stevens and Whetzel, the interruption of life as we knew it could not have come at a worse time. Were this an April where hope springs eternal, Stevens would be providing play-by-play of what likely would have been an Amerks Calder Cup playoff run. Whetzel, meanwhile, would have been describing the pomp and circumstance associated with Opening Day at a downtown Rochester ballpark decked out in red, white and blue bunting Thursday afternoon.

Time, as esteemed baseball writer Thomas Boswell once mused, begins on Opening Day. But that unofficial holiday, like hockey playoffs and everything else, has been halted. And given the dire prognosis of medical experts, we don't know if the seasons that were paused or the ones that never began will play out in 2020.

"I'm trying to remain optimistic," Stevens says. "But with each passing day, the odds go up that it won't be happening. It's tough not to be pessimistic."

The Amerks' theme song, "Freeze Frame" by the J. Geils Band, seems appropriate background music for these troubled times because we find our seasons and our lives frozen in time. Perhaps, in the case of Stevens and Whetzel, Simon and Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence" is more apropos. "Hello darkness, my old friend."

No announcers in the history of Rochester's longest running sports franchises have done it better than these two. If you tack on the other sports they've called, here and in other places, you have a combined 77 years of broadcast experience and somewhere in the neighborhood of 11,000 games.

"It's basically been my entire career since I got out of college," says Whetzel, who has spent 28 of his 47 years talking into a microphone for a living. "It's prob-



ON SPORTS

Scott Pitoniak

ably the only thing I know how to do and, hopefully, do well, and I don't know when I'll be able to do it again."

Even if the pandemic subsides ahead of scientific predictions, and the Wings' season were to start, Whetzel will be faced with a dilemma. Going into his senior year of high school, life threw him a nasty curve when he was diagnosed with a form of cancer that required the removal of one of his lungs. With a breathing capacity roughly half that of an average person's, Whetzel realizes he would have a difficult time combatting COVID-19, which is especially harsh on those with compromised respiratory systems.

"I'm much more at risk with this," he says. "So I have to take a hard look at how I can do my job if and when the season begins. Sure, I can control the announcer's booth, and be safe there."

But so much of his work is done before games, and he wouldn't be able to go into the clubhouse or dugouts to do interviews, which is a big part of his job.

"And the travel part worries me, too," Whetzel says. "If you are on a crowded bus or a plane, it's impossible to practice social distancing because you're always sitting near somebody. I definitely will have some tough decisions to make. My approach to doing my job will change dramatically."

Stevens' age and some health issues also make him vulnerable.

"I recently told my sister that for the first time in my life, I'm flat-out scared," he says.

Both men have experienced acts of kindness during their forced isolation. Whetzel mentions how co-workers Dan Mason, Matt Cipro, Nick Sciaratta and Naomi Silver have picked up groceries and dropped off food.

"Dan's wife, Sheila, is one hell of a cook," he says. "I don't know how Dan doesn't weigh 300 pounds."

Whetzel chuckles, then turns serious. He, Stevens and the vast majority of Americans have grasped the gravity of the situation and have followed the recommendations of medical experts. But the two sportscasters are bothered when they see a minority of people behaving as if this is some sort of hoax.

"I hate to be blunt," Whetzel says, "but anyone who doesn't think this is real or who isn't following these guidelines is an idiot. There have been so many uplifting stories of dedication and sacrifice, but a few bad, ignorant apples are undermining our efforts. The more people follow the guidelines, the better our chances of getting through this."

Adds Stevens: "Stay home, people. That's my PSA (public service announcement)."

The two longtime voices of Rochester sports also are voices of reason.

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