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The Monthly Security Awareness Newsletter for Everyone

Stop That Phish

Overview

Email and messaging services (such as Skype, Twitter, or Snapchat) are one of the primary ways we communicate. We not only use these technologies every day for work, but also to stay in touch with friends and family. Since so many people around the world depend on these technologies, they have become one of the primary attack methods used by cyber attackers. This attack method is called phishing. Learn what phishing is and how you can spot and stop these attacks, regardless if you are at work or at home.

What Is Phishing

Phishing is a type of attack that uses email or a messaging service to fool you into taking an action you should not take, such as clicking on a malicious link, sharing your password, or opening an infected email attachment. Attackers work hard to make these messages convincing and tap your emotional triggers, such as urgency or curiosity. They can make them look like they came from someone or something you know, such as a friend or a trusted company you frequently use. They could even add logos of your bank or forge the email address so the message appears more legitimate. Attackers then send these messages to millions of people. They do not know who will take the bait, all they know is the more they send, the more people will fall victim.

Protecting Yourself

In almost all cases, opening and reading an email or message is fine. For a phishing attack to work, the bad guys need to trick you into doing something. Fortunately, there are clues that a message is an attack. Here are the most common ones:

- ✓ A tremendous sense of urgency that demands "immediate action" before something bad happens, like threatening to close an account or send you to jail. The attacker wants to rush you into making a mistake.

- ✓ Pressuring you to bypass or ignore your policies or procedures at work.

- ✓ A strong sense of curiosity or something that is too good to be true. (No, you did not win the lottery.)

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