The Anatomy of a Phishing Attack

WHAT IS PHISHING?

Phishing is a cybercrime in which bad guys falsely take on the identity of a legitimate sender to lure victims into providing sensitive information such as passwords and banking details. Phishing attacks are most commonly initiated through email spoofing.

PHISHING, SPEAR PHISHING, AND WHALING

Phishing, spear phishing, and whaling attacks vary in complexity and targeting.

Phishing

Phishing schemes have no specific target and phishing emails often contain spelling errors or other mistakes.

Spear Phishing

Spear phishing is more personalized with communications appearing to come from sources known to the target.

Whaling

Whaling attacks are spear-phishing attacks aimed at high-profile targets within an organization.

93%

of confirmed data breaches involved phishing by luring users with malicious attachments or email links.

(Verizon 2018 DBIR)

Email phishing threats grew 250% in 2018, with attackers switching between URLs, domains, and servers when sending emails and hosting phishing forms during the same campaign.

(Microsoft Security Intelligence Report 2019)

HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER: A TYPICAL PHISHING ATTACK

HOOK

An unsolicited email containing convincing content and a link from a seemingly familiar address arrives in the target's inbox.

The target clicks the link.

LINE

The link opens to a legitimate looking website that asks the user for their credentials. It is also common for malware to automatically download when the user clicks the email link.

REAL

FAKE

SINKER

The target submits sensitive information such as credit card or banking credentials and then gets redirected to the actual website. Meanwhile, the attacker makes off with the stolen info and can begin using it for malicious purposes.

Organizations need other methods to protect against risks posed by phishing.

At Farsight Security, we help Fortune 500 organizations fight phishing and other cyberattacks every day. Learn more how we can help your organization and contact us at sales@farsightsecurity.com.

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