

Blog for TrustSphere

<http://www.trustsphere.com/spear-phishing-it-will-never-happen-to-me-until-it-does/>

Spear phishing: It will never happen to me ... until it does!

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Few things amaze me anymore, but I am dumbfounded by how many people consider spear phishing to be “someone else’s problem.” Too many people – who really should know better – don’t believe they or their organizations could ever be outsmarted by the legions of hackers, cybercriminals and dirty tricksters lurking around the globe.

The truth of course is that spear phishing is a very real threat with very serious consequences for the targets.

Unlike the countless variants of the comically obvious “Nigerian millionaire” attack some people still receive regularly, spear phishing is orchestrated with great planning, care and precision by technically savvy cybercriminals who target specific individuals with as few as a single message.

One incident in particular stands out in my mind.

At the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, email and Internet access had to be completely suspended after a successful spear phishing attack in April. The attackers’ carefully crafted message looked like it came from HR and included instructions to click an innocent looking link which introduced sophisticated malware into the network.

What’s most troubling is that cybersecurity is one of the many things researched at Oak Ridge. In particular, researchers at the lab investigate malware and phishing! This just goes to show that well planned and executed spear phishing attacks can fool even the savviest of victims.

Whilst the focus is on senior executives and those with access to market sensitive data, no one is immune and everyone is a potential target.

Combatting spear phishing is no easy matter; however, the advanced Trusted Sender Recognition capabilities we have developed give organizations a powerful tool to help mitigate these attacks by enabling users and security professionals to simply distinguish between suspicious and legitimate senders.