

Cybersecurity Four Minute Friday

Kara Snyder

Kara, hello and welcome to a special edition of the Podcast, the podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Our four minute Friday episodes are quick chats about what's up on campus, helping you to make the most of your time as a red bird. Today, we have the opportunity to talk to Dan Taube, Chief Information Security Officer for Illinois State University. Welcome and thank you for being here.

Dan Taube

Thank you for welcoming me in.

Kara Snyder

Well, Dan, October is Cyber Security Awareness month for our listeners, what is the single most common cyber threat they are likely to face, and how does it typically appear in a university environment?

Dan Taube

Yes, based on our own experiences and echoed by some industry reports we follow for the education sector, it's probably unsolicited messages that try to convince the recipient to do something they otherwise wouldn't or shouldn't do. There is often a sense of urgency with these to either prevent something bad or to gain something that's what I would say too good to be true, and they can come via email, text message, or even in some chat platforms.

Kara Snyder

So that sounds like what many may call social engineering. Can you give us a quick, real world example of what that looks like for a college student and why it might be so effective?

Dan Taube

Yes, definitely, but we certainly see the common type that people are probably familiar with that kind of scare with account lockouts or data deletion. But what we think are more effective lately have been forms that they're developed around, offers for either high paying remote jobs or financial aid grants that specifically add a student context to it. We believe that these are more effective simply because they're so similar to legitimate messages, and they really do pass technical detections that look for those other type of common threats. The Compelling benefit for a student is just offering easy access to money they are not, you know, framed where it's a lengthy interview process or a lot of requirements to get it. It's a grant aid type of option. They're just saying here's easy access to money, and that really hooks the students that obviously need it.

Kara Snyder

Yeah, I could see where that would be super compelling. So tell us then, what is one thing that listeners could do today to dramatically reduce their risk online.

Dan Taube

Without a doubt, I would strongly encourage listeners to consider not reusing passwords across services. You know, there's 1020 different things I could recommend depending on exactly what technology anyone uses, but this one's going to be pretty consistently beneficial for any digital data user. And if you can do that, then you're going to minimize when one of these incidents happen or you fall victim to it, because they're really not looking for just your personal data or maybe your financial information. They're looking for the accounts and access you have. And so if you reuse password and passwords, and they get one of those, they're going to try it across many services, and the kind of damage they can do greatly expands from that. And so if you're willing to not reuse passwords, maybe choose to use a password manager that can help you manage that and generate strong passwords.

Kara Snyder

So if someone receives a suspicious email, or if they just want to learn more, where is the best place for them to go?

Dan Taube

So if they are using the Outlook software from Microsoft or the web based version, there is a report button in there that will send it directly to the Information Security Office. That's a very effective way, because it allows us to kind of automatically respond and clean it up for anyone else that might see it. But other than that, they can email us information security at i, L, S, T, u.edu, but then if there's general questions, or if you want to take some of our trainings, look at guidance we have, at the help that Illinois State, that edu website, if you go there, slash information security, you will find all of our materials that we make publicly available.

Kara Snyder

Well, thanks so much for this information, Dan, and thanks again for being here.

Dan Taube

Thank you. I was happy to join you.

Kara Snyder

That was Dan Taube, Chief Information Security Officer for Illinois State University. Thanks for tuning in to this episode of four minute Fridays. If you have an idea of something that we should chat about on these short episodes, contact information is in the show notes.