Information and Extortion

As someone who gets calls everyday from information seekers (pretty much everyone) I have been receiving calls in the morning asking me to provide information for an “Opportunity” on my student loans. Funny thing was I surprisingly had none from my UC Santa Cruz experience because I miraculously qualified for scholarships and did not need any loans whatsoever for my experience. So, after realizing this, I was relieved in not having any debts to pay to the University.

Unfortunately, not all attempts of extortion are as detectable and as simple as the attempt made on my nonexistent student loans. My understanding of extortion is essentially a practice of taking money or property using brute force or unethical means. The reading this week stated information extortion as

“The act of an attacker or trusted insider who steals or interrupts access to information from a computer system and demands compensation for its return or for an agreement not to disclose the information.” (Whitman, p. 86).

Nokia in 2007 suffered a case which did not have a solution for the extortion it suffered. A hacker in Finland stole the source code of their phone and threatened to release it to the public if the individual was not paid a multimillion-dollar ransom. The individuals got the money and managed to escape with the money anyway (BBC News, 2014). Since Nokia was refusing to comment on the situation and because they did not reveal how the hack occurred, it is difficult to come up with a parameter that would make vulnerable hacks in the future difficult to access. You could make parameters that make the system more secure and create alerts when your system is being accessed and make preventative measures. The movie this week recommends creating a backup on your hard drive so that you can just restore your system instead of paying the individual the ransom money (Messer, 2016), but in the case of Nokia, that would not have worked in their case. If that software was revealed to the public most individuals with phones would have been severely vulnerable to even more hack attempts on their devices.

References

BBC News. (2014, June 18). Nokia 'paid ransom hackers millions'. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-27909096 (Links to an external site.)

Messer. (2016, February 14). Common Security Threats - CompTIA A+ 220-902 - 3.1 [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9LHvMdU-60

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