

# Click Thinking Spotlight

## Catfishing

As humans, we all long to connect. It's a need cybercriminals have learned to exploit through a tactic known as catfishing—the act of luring one into a relationship by pretending to be someone else.

- Catfishing is a one-sided affair that seeks money, power and control for the scammer but can leave the target financially, emotionally and even professionally devastated.
- Most catfishing begins online where scammers can hide behind fake pictures and profiles on dating and social networking sites. These fake accounts are known as 'sock puppets.'
- The profiles they create present attractive, successful and interesting people that anyone would want to connect with.
- Once the connection is made, the catfisher wastes no time building upon it, lavishing praise on the target or providing a sympathetic ear.
- The scammer may pretend to like the same music or movies to deepen the bond or seek to help the target through a relationship or personal problem. In this beginning stage, the target is often swept up in feelings of elation and love.
- Soon, the scammer escalates the dialogue with seemingly innocent requests for personal details, such as where the target works, banks and lives.
- Appeals for money are common at this stage. Often, they're tied to a trip to come visit the target that only the scammer knows will never happen.
- The scammer may ask for intimate photos to prove the target's devotion, which can later be used to blackmail the target. This is called 'sextortion.'
- You can protect yourself from catfishers by asking the following questions: Does this person seem too good to be true? Is this person more attractive and successful than the usual prospects? Do online searches for this person yield little or conflicting results? Is the relationship moving way too fast? A yes answer to any of these means you're likely being catfished.
- By saving the person's profile image and uploading it to Google Image Search, it may reveal the source site of the original image.
- If requests to meet or video chat are put off or canceled repeatedly due to unexpected circumstances, there's a good chance the person is catfishing.

### CATFISHING



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For the animated training module on this topic, see your manager or information security.