

Humor as a phishing lure

Why it works, and how it can be used to make awareness training stick.

It's Funny Until Someone Gets Phished

Phishing emails often employ humor as a manipulative tool to increase their success rate in deceiving recipients. While the nature of phishing is inherently malicious, the use of humor serves several strategic purposes in these deceptive messages.

Humor can create a sense of familiarity and friendliness, lowering the target's guard. By adopting a tone that appears lighthearted or casual, a phishing email can establish a connection, making the recipient more susceptible to the message. People are more likely to let their guard down and engage with content that seems approachable.

Moreover, humor helps distract recipients from scrutinizing the email with a critical eye. When a message is amusing, individuals

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may be less inclined to question its legitimacy or analyze it for potential threats. This distraction can be a powerful tactic, diverting attention away from suspicious elements, such as malicious links or fake domains.

Humor can instill a sense of curiosity, prompting targets to act impulsively. This is especially true in social media phishing where scammers use humorous quizzes or posts that disarm suspicion and exploit the emotional response of laughter. Humor distracts users from skepticism, fostering a false sense of trust, making them susceptible to deceptive schemes and fraudulent activities.

In summary, humor serves as a social engineering technique to manipulate targets. By fostering a false sense of connection, distracting from critical analysis, and leveraging curiosity, criminals use humor to increase the effectiveness of their deceptive scams.

Using Humor to Fight Phishing

Humor in phishing awareness training can captivate participants, enhancing engagement and retention. It turns a serious topic into an enjoyable learning experience, making individuals more likely to remember and apply what they've learned when confronted with a real-world phishing situation.

Barracuda Security Awareness Training is pleased to offer a wide range of videos that use humor to entertain and engage viewers. Developed by the National Cybersecurity Alliance, these highly produced vignettes feature Hollywood A-listers, like Michael B. Jordan, in hilarious vignettes spotlighting some of today's most compelling cyber threats. And the entire catalog is ready to use to further your training efforts. Locate them in the training catalog using the **Name** filter and the search term **NCSA**.



Computer Theft



Data Handling



Personal Accountability



Passwords



Ransomware



Removable Media



Vishing



Public Wifi



Internet Downloads



Multi-factor Authentication



Phishing



Protect Connect