Chapter 20
The Security Impacts on Social Media Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Because of its importance, social media became a main target in cyber war and for criminals as well. The attacker can gain a lot of valued information from social media. This chapter will discuss the security impacts on social media and their effects on individuals, companies, and governments. This chapter, also will explain risks of using Internet, the importance of social media for attackers, what could go wrong in social media, examples of methods used by attackers, why attackers success in their attacks, social media problems from a legal point of view, social media security environment, general security model for social media web sites, data that could be mined, points of attack, security defenses against attacks, methods of security attacks, reasons of attacking social media, social media programming flaws, social media security strategy and policy, social media privacy and governments, social media security new trends, and the best practice in social media.

INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. It is any online platform where people gather to share opinions and relate with one another (OSCE, 2013). Social media becomes a main part in our life. In the past we used different web sites and different applications for communications and exchange information such as: emails, chatting, news, entertainment, etc, but thanks to social media that make it possible to do all these activities now through using a single site. Social media is not important only for individuals but also becomes important to companies and organization because it doesn’t only provide the ability for users to communicate with each other but also enable them to find like-minded individuals “power of the masses”. Social media helps in shifting power from organization to clients as the masses are able to channel and exert their influences.

Firms no longer rely on traditional media (print, radio, TV, etc.) to enforce public perception of their services and products. By harnessing social media information, organizations can use...
it to help in identifying their most influential clients, drive participation in service and product development, and improve their images (Social Networking, 2013).

Although there are many advantages of social media, but at the same time it can be a target for security threats and attacks such information leaks and also a malware attack vector. In this chapter we will explain the main security concerns in social media and the importance of social media networks for attackers and their incentive, and the best practice to use social media in a safety way.

**TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

Social media can be categorized as the following:

- **Social Networks:** Allow users to build and maintain relationships with others. In this kind of social media, only your contacts on your private network can see your posts. Examples are Facebook and Google+.
- **Forums and Online Communities:** Social media platforms focused on a specific audience or topic. Chat rooms and online forum are examples for this type of social media.
- **Blogs:** Allows users to easily publish and share content, similar to a personal journal. Web blogs nowadays are widely used.
- **Micro Blogging:** Allows users to post short messages, typically 140 characters or less like SMS. Twitter is an example for this kind.
- **Multimedia Sharing:** Allows users to post and share multimedia content with others. Examples are YouTube for videos, for shared for different kinds of files and Instagram for images and short videos.
- **Location Services:** Allow users to share their where about with others. Although there are security concerns of using this kind of social media regarding to privacy, but at the same time this kind is so effective for business and marketing and it could be used in works that need to be allocate like voluntary jobs. Four square is good example for this kind.
- **Bookmarks:** Allows users to share web sites of interest with others.

**RISKS OF USING THE INTERNET**

Although the rapid development of information technology, security attacks on the Internet and its applications are still an easy task, several reasons contribute to this issue (Peixian, 2013):

- The tools necessary to perform an attack on the Internet is fairly cheap.
- The Internet till now doesn’t offer much security.
- Eavesdropping and using false identity is simple.
- Stealing data is undetectable in most cases.
- Popular PC operating systems offer little or no security against security attacks.
- User awareness for security risks is threateningly low.

The previous points are encouraging attackers to attack social media platforms and take advantages from these attacks.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ATTACKERS**

Social media can be a source of valued and private information; they can also become a malware attack vector when they are not used in the right way. Users and companies trust their contacts for not sending bad links, not trying to infect their computers, and taking good care of their private data. The real cleverness comes