

## WHAT IS SOCIAL ENGINEERING?



### WHAT HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD KNOW

From phishing to vishing to physical tailgating, social engineering attacks are on the rise—probably because they're so effective. Unfortunately, housing organizations are not immune. We asked Richard Moore, HAI Group's virtual information security officer and a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) and Certified Information Security Manager (CISM), to give us an introduction to the practice to help you avert these attacks.

#### **HAI Group: Thanks for taking the time to talk to us and our housing organizations, Rich. So what exactly is social engineering?**

**Richard Moore:** Social engineering is a discipline in social science that refers to efforts to influence particular attitudes and social behaviors on a large scale, whether by governments, media, or private groups, to produce desired characteristics in a target population. Social engineers use the scientific method to analyze and understand social systems so they can design the appropriate methods to achieve the desired results in human subjects.

#### **HAI Group: So it's legit?**

**RM:** Right. Social engineering is not just a 'trick' whereby someone is trying to trick you into giving out something private about you, your company, or your company's customers. It's actually based in science.

#### **HAI Group: Sounds scary when it's in the wrong hands. So how do cybercriminals use social engineering?**

**RM:** Criminals use social engineering in numerous ways. It can be used for cybercrime, espionage, corporate competitiveness, and illegal activities beyond just ransomware.

#### **HAI Group: How does social engineering affect housing organizations?**

**RM:** For housing organizations, social engineering can be used against employees personally as well as the organization's agendas through negative campaigns, statements taken out of context, illegal access to your customer base for illegal marketing and tracking, or to take advantage of other social economic benefits. Ransomware is the payload from what a social engineering attack can deliver. In those attacks, criminals use the scientific methods of influence to get someone in your organization to click on a link, visit a webpage, or open a PDF so they can access your systems and do physical and economic damage to the housing organization.

#### **HAI Group: What can organizations do to protect themselves?**

**RM:** Social engineering can be combated with training. At HAI Group, we use [KnowBe4: Security Awareness Training](#) with all employees, which provides virtual training on the newest social engineering tricks that are being deployed against companies so that employees know what to look out for. Additionally, we leverage penetration testing [to check for security vulnerabilities]. We have found that by mandating 2-3 minutes of training per quarter and 45 minutes of training annually we have significantly reduced the threat of social engineering.

#### **HAI Group: Thanks, Rich.**

**RM:** My pleasure.

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