

# The Target Hack

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# What Happened?

- In 2013 Target underwent a data breach that caused 40 million customer credit card numbers to be released.
- 70 million customer's personal information was also released.

# How did the hackers gain access?

- The hackers were able to gain access to privileged login credentials of an employee of Fazio Mechanical Services, a third party HVAC contractor, through a phishing email.
- When hackers gained access to Fazio systems they also gained access to Target's systems.
- Once Fazio had access, the hackers installed malware on Target's network which gave them the credit card numbers and personal information of Target's customers.



# What Failed?

*There were multiple points of failure:*

- Target had a secure payment system, but because they did not separate their secure payment systems from the rest of their network this security was useless.

# What Failed?

- Fazio did not have proper anti-virus software installed and was unable to realize that it was compromised by the phishing scam.

# What Failed?

- Target was notified of the intrusion by their security system before the hack was carried out.
- They elected to ignore this warning and do nothing.
- The security system worked exactly as it was supposed to. It was the fault of Target that no action was taken.
- They delayed to inform customers of the breach over the Christmas holiday shopping period.



# How can this be prevented?

- It is important to segregate different systems from each other so that if one is compromised the others can remain secure.
- Security is only as good as the weakest link, and companies need to limit access to secure systems as much as possible.
- It is important to use security software properly and to its full capacity.
- It is important to take all threats seriously.

# Conclusion

- Software is only as secure as the people who use it.
- Despite the fact that Target had a state of the art security system, they were breached because of human error, bad design choices, and poor decision making.



# Sources

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