**Lab 4 – Software Disasters – 2011 Playstation Network Hack**

**(I)Project/Product Description**

Play Station Network(PSN) is Sony’s set of online services used for their PlayStation home consoles and PS Vita handheld console. This allows users to download and play games alone, with friend or with random people online. Users can stream video and music. Users can earn trophies for completing challenges in games. User can stream their gameplay for their friends to watch. User can use the instant messaging service to message their friends. Information such as your name, address credit card details etc are stored online. This give Sony a lot of responsibility to keep their users information safe and secure.

**(II)Organisation(s) or Companies responsible for development.**

Sony is solely responsible for the development and running of Play Station Network. They are responsible for whatever information was leaked during the hack.

**(III)What went wrong**

On April 20th 2011 users trying to connect to PSN on their PS3s were greeted with a message saying the network was “Undergoing Maintenance”. It turned out PSN became the target of the hacker group Anonymous. They got access to the user information of PSNs 77 million users. Sony decided to shut down the service until they could release a patch to fix the vulnerability. This went on for weeks before Sony brought their online services back online.

It all started with Sony suing American hacker George Hotz. In January 2010 Hotz released an exploit to the public which allowed people to jailbreak their PS3s. Sony sued George Hotz and eventually won. Forcing him to take down his website and remove the exploit from the internet. This angered hacker group Anonymous. They released a video threatening to unleash a massive attack against Sony’s PSN service.

Soon Sony realised their servers were being hacked. Sony quickly turned off PSN to prevent the hackers from doing any more damage. It was too late though. The hackers had gotten identifiable information for all 77 million PSN users. This became the biggest Personal information leak in history beating the last record of 45 million customers set in the 2007 TJX hack.

Over a month later Sony patched the vulnerabilities and brought PSN back online. They apologised to their customers and offered a free month of PSN plus and 2 free games.

**(IV)What were the consequences of the failure**

Sony estimates the outage cost them 171 million dollars. Sony launched an internal investigation and worked with law enforcement with their investigations.

The personal information of 77 million users was stolen.

Some credit card information got stolen too.

**(V)Why it went wrong**

Sony had inadequate security on their servers. They eventually patched the vulnerability, but it shouldn’t have been a problem in the first place.

**(VII)Lessons learned – from a software engineering perspective**

Sony learned about how vulnerable their systems are. They learned to improve the security of their services and the user information they store.

**(VIII)References**

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