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## The Sony PSN Hack of 2011

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The Sony PSN Hack of 2011 was one of the largest data breaches which exposed 77 million PSN accounts, exposing personal information. The attack occurred from April 17<sup>th</sup> – April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This attack forced Sony to shut down their PSN service for 23 days, from April 20<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. However, users were not told the reasons for the shutdown.

Prior to the attack, George Hotz, an American hacker found flaws in the PS3 hardware. He released root keys of the software on his website. His intention was to use it for home brew; however, this could be used for piracy purposes. Sony acted and went to court with him on the claim that he violation of the DMCA, computer fraud, and copyright infringement. The suit was later settled that George would not tinker with the product again. George found flaws in the security would prove crucial going forward

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011, DDOS attacks started occurring on the PSN network by a hacking group known by Anonymous, which would frequently force players out of their games. Anonymous would let out statements, stating that these attacks were directed at Sony, rather than the players. The little hole in the security were starting to get more and more noticeable as time progressed. Sony was now aware of these flaws and choose to do nothing about it.

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the PSN network went down causing users to be confused. Users were not able to login to their accounts or games. Sony did not specify the reason, however, most people

assumed that it was Anonymous since they have caused trouble in the past. The scale of the attack was not known, but it was being investigated behind the scenes by Sony.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Sony admitted to the public that an external intrusion has happened, and that the situation was investigated. However, Sony would lie to the public. Behind the scenes, Sony understood that a data breach had occurred and was currently investigating how much data was compromised. The public was left confused and many theorized that worse. News outlets started ramping up on the situation.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Sony finally revealed the information that was compromised. The name, birthday, email, address, login, purchase history, billing address, password, security answers, credit card info were exposed. Sony sent out a warning for potential attacks to cancel credit cards and watch out for scams in the mail. It was around this time that news outlets started to slam Sony for their handling of the network. Almost a week has occurred at this point since the network was shutdown and now consumers were finding out this information. This left many questions to the public.

The following day, on April 27<sup>th</sup>, Sony did damage control by answering questions online about the data breach. These questions were very bare bones, and still left consumers with many unanswered questions. At this point, Sony was under much pressure to apologize to the general public and go into more detail about the attack.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Sony had a press conference apologizing for the attack. They announced a welcome back package as an incentive to get users back once the service comes back up. The credit card info was encrypted and there was no evidence that the information was exposed. Sony

announced security would be ramped up going forward. A Chief information security officer would be added in the company.

To this day, no one knows who was responsible for the attack. However, it is theorized that Anonymous had a degree of impact. The impact on Sony was significant, however not severe. Sony lost around \$170 million from this data breach and lost its trust from the public. The effects of the data breach were only short term.

Although the data breach was massive, users would eventually come back. Sony is still around to this day and is stronger than ever. Lessons were learned and the PSN network has not suffered a data breach since. The PSN network is very profitable for Sony, acting as an online service for millions of users.

#### Resources

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBflgU5ComI>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011\\_PlayStation\\_Network\\_outage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_PlayStation_Network_outage)