

# Lend me your IR's!

**HackCon**

The Norwegian cyber security convention

Matt Scheurer

 @c3rkah

 <http://slides.dfirmatt.com>



Slide deck initializing...

February 09, 2023



```
if (badEvent == "true") {  
    perform = "Incident Response";  
}
```



# What I do...

I work for a big well-known organization...



As an Assistant Vice President (AVP) of Computer Security and Incident Response (IR). However, I have many years of hands-on technical experience, including Digital Forensics & Incident Response (DFIR).

I am also a Podcast Host for

**ThreatReel**

<https://threatreel.com>

# Where I volunteer...

I am an Official



Advocate

<https://www.hackingisnotacrime.org>

I am also a



Women's Security Alliance  
(WomSA) Technical Mentor

<https://www.womsa.org>

# Disclaimer!

Yes, I have a day job.  
However...

Opinions expressed are  
based solely on my own  
independent security  
research and do not  
express or reflect the views  
or opinions of my employer.



# Objectives

- Show demo reenactments of real attacks
  - How these real world attacks worked
  - How & why they defeated security solutions
- Show Incident Responses to these attacks
  - Demo investigation tools and techniques
  - Discuss lessons learned and takeaways

# Acronyms Used

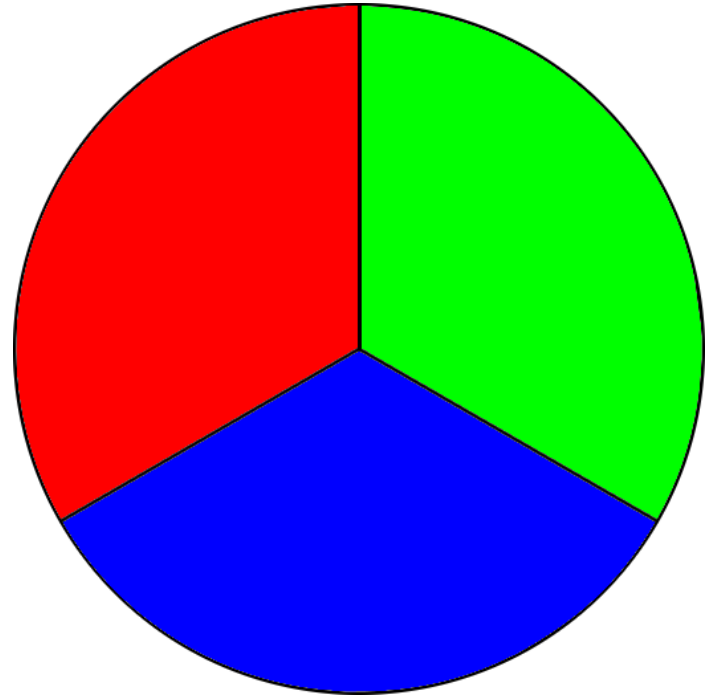
- IOC (or “IoC”)
  - Indicator Of Compromise
- IR
  - Incident Response
- DFIR
  - Digital Forensics & Incident Response

# Other Disclaimers

- Demos are all based on 100% true stories
  - These demos dutifully recreate actual attacks
  - However, some details were altered
- Investigation demos are sped up considerably
  - In the interest of allotted presentation time
- Only perform these techniques in a dedicated securely isolated and volatile sandbox!

# **\*\*\* Live Demo Alert \*\*\***

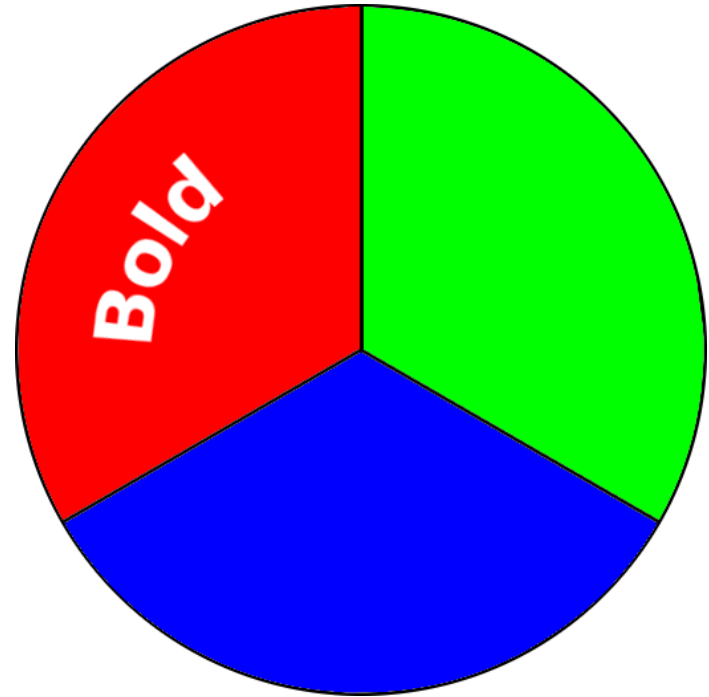
This presentation  
features “Live Demos”,  
because the speaker  
is...





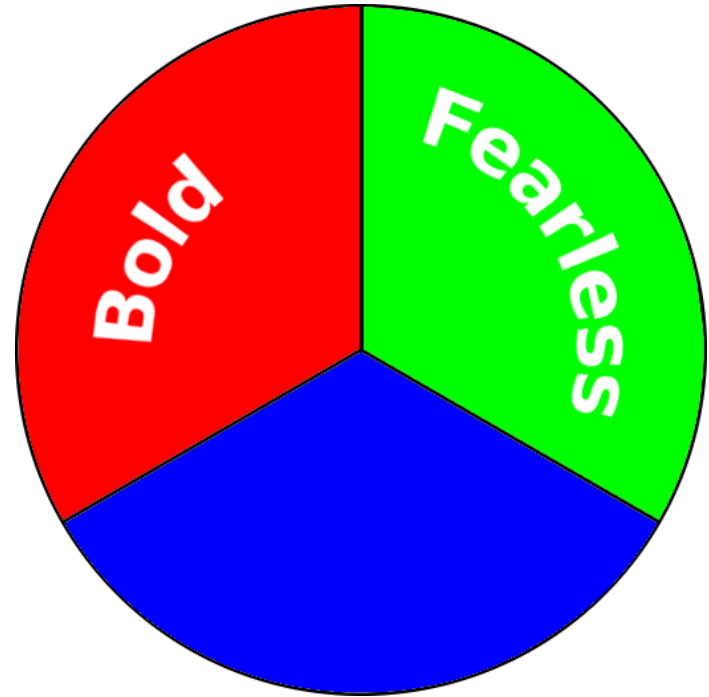
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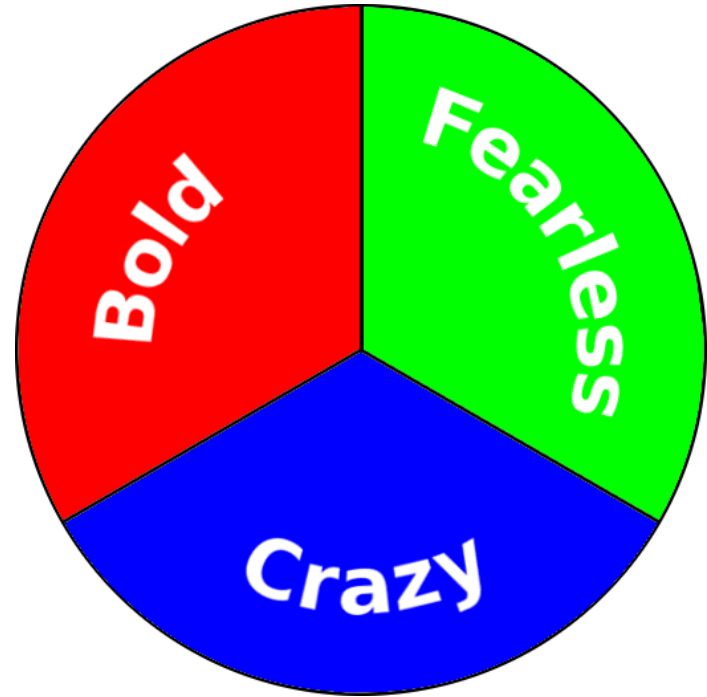
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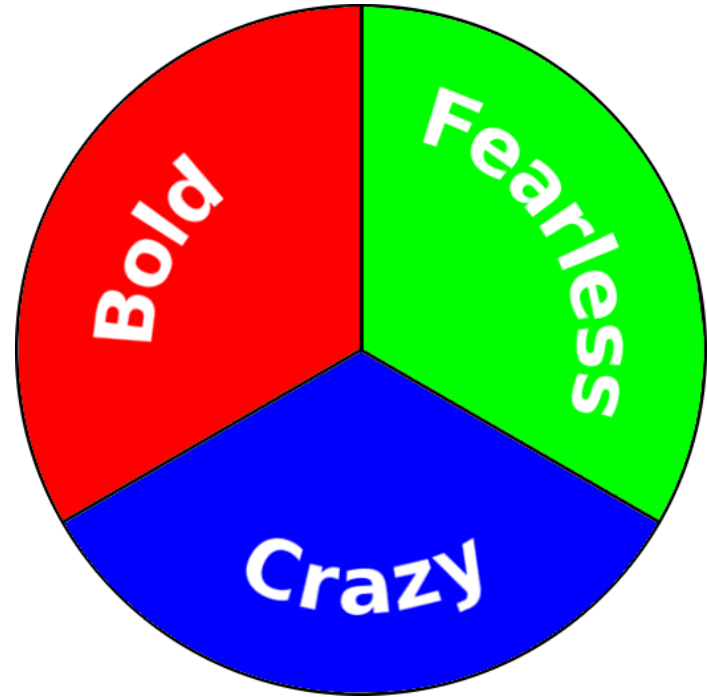
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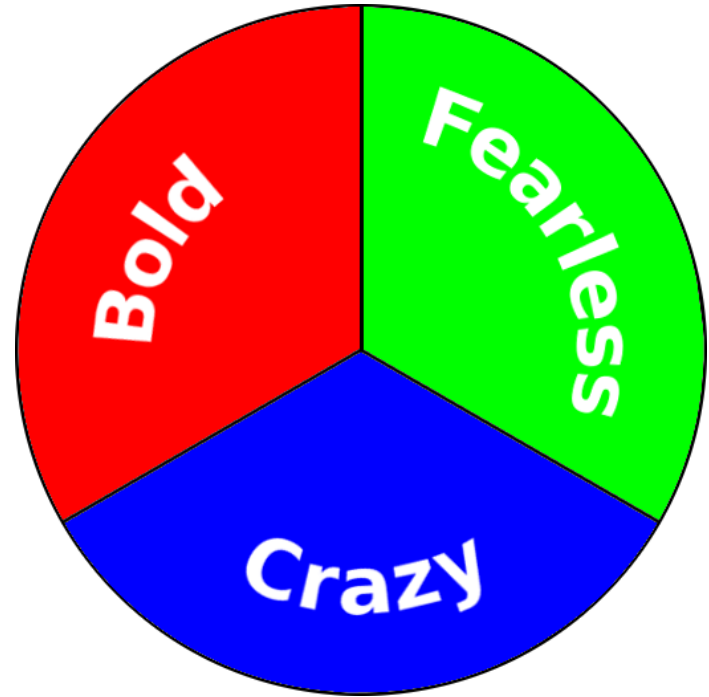
Please pick 2...



# \*\*\* Live Demo Alert \*\*\*

Please pick 2...

So I am not just Crazy!



# Scenario #1

*“The Mystery Attachment”*

# Preface

News Headline from August 17, 2018:  
*“Malspam Campaign Targets Banks Using  
Microsoft Publisher”*

The “FlawwedAmmy RAT” was part of the “Necurs botnet” as reported by researchers at Trustwave.

Reference: <https://www.trustwave.com/en-us/resources/blogs/spiderlabs-blog/malspam-campaign-targets-banks-using-microsoft-publisher/>

# The following week...

Matt! Help!! One of our VIP's with access to lots of very sensitive information just got hit in that recent malspam campaign targeting banks. It matches the IOC's from reports of that new FlawedAmmyy RAT which is part of the Necurs botnet! The recipient attempted to open the MS Publisher attachment on their smart phone. I need you to drop whatever you are doing and investigate this. We'll get you the attachment ASAP!!!



↑  
Frantic  
Visitor



↑  
Me

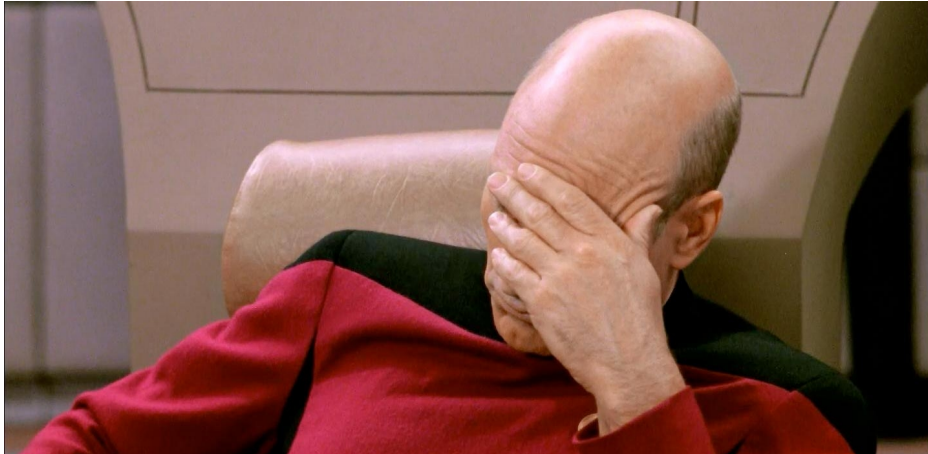


# Investigation

- Open the file (Demo) in a Sandbox
  - Detonation, research, attempts and failure to understand anything about this “malicious file”
    - Strings (Demo)
    - Hash (Demo) & Search
    - Check EXIF data (Demo), while pondering my next steps...

# DERP!!!

That Facepalm  
Moment...



When you realize that  
the email attachment  
you've just spent the  
past 3+ hours analyzing  
actually came from your  
test phishing vendor!

# Validation

I checked the email message headers, and they were what I expected, but I read it like this...

Received: from mail-server.your.test-phishing.company (mail-server.your.test-phishing.company. [**Yes Matt, this really is your test phishing vendor's IP address, YOU DOLT!**])

# What went wrong?

- I got caught up in the moment by subconsciously letting somebody else influence my investigation
- Their anxiety and assumptions wore off on me
- Always start with the message headers when investigating phishing emails and contents!
  - I abandoned my own standards this one time by focusing on the file attachment first

# Remediation

- The road to redemption
  - Painful lessons learned for reminders to stick to my standard investigative processes and procedures
  - Had I started my investigation by inspecting the message headers first I could have closed out the investigation in minutes instead of hours
- No further technical actions required

# Scenario #2

*“Security Scanner Evasion”*

# Preface

- Identical phishing email starts hitting Inboxes
  - Wide-scale reports of phishing come pouring in
- The phishing page link no longer appears to be working in my security scanner.
  - Was this malicious site taken offline already?
    - Let's investigate and find out...

# Investigation

- Check the email message source code (Demo)
  - Note hyperlinks
- Checking the landing page with a security scanner (Simulation Demo)
- Checking the landing page source code (Demo)
- Open the phishing page (Demo) in a Sandbox



# Results

- How the evasion code works
  - Browser User-Agent string based redirection
- Thoughts
  - Source could be hidden with server-side languages (ASP.NET, CGI, Java, Perl, PHP, Python, Ruby, etc.)
  - Could target specific browsers or browser versions using exploit kit round-robin redirects

# Remediation

- 1) Determined the actual phishing landing page and blocked through web content filtering.
- 2) Worked with our secure email gateway vendor to block the active phishing campaign.

# Scenario #3

*“The Rabbit Hole”*

# Preface

- I received a request from a user to investigate an email message they received to determine if it is legitimate or not
- The email appears “Phishy” at first glance, but *“Is it just suspicious or is it malicious?”*

# The Investigation

- I can tell from the message headers that the source IP address is a mismatch for the senders domain
- The message source code is particularly interesting...
  - Link text does not match the hyperlink destination (Demo)
- The malicious threat actor's objective appears to be a credential harvesting site (Demo) for the purposes of Account Take Over (ATO)

# Destination #1

- The landing page appears to go to a compromised web host in a foreign country, but does it stop there?
- Obtain the page source to find out (Demo)

# Destination #2

- The next landing page appears to go to a compromised web host in a different foreign country, but does it stop there?
- Obtain the page source to find out (Demo)

# Destination #3

- That landing page appears to go to a compromised web host in yet another foreign country, but does it stop there?
- Obtain the page source to find out (Demo)



# Encoded Content

- The malicious threat actor has used JavaScript encoding to avoid analysis and detection, while hiding the page source (Demo)
  - Decoding the page source using the built-in browser developer tools (Demo)

# Encoded Elements

- Whether the threat actor used encoded elements to avoid analysis and detection, or keep the entire site as a single page file, they used Base64 encoded elements (Demo) within their JavaScript encoded page.
  - Decoding the Base64 page elements using the built-in browser developer tools (Demo)
  - And decoding page elements by hand (Demo)

# Remediation

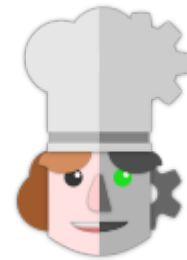
- 1) Determined the final phishing landing page and blocked through web content filtering.
- 2) Blocked intermediary compromised web servers through web content filtering.
- 3) Reported compromised web sites to domain owners and hosting companies through their WHOIS contact records.

# Epilogue

In the time since these original investigations, I've learned **CyberChef**. I've used **CyberChef** often for file analysis in recent years.

## CyberChef:

*The Cyber Swiss Army Knife*



<https://gchq.github.io/CyberChef/>

Please check out my free “CyberChef Workshop”...

<http://workshops.dfir-matt.com>

# In Closing

If you see me online or at a conference, please reach out and share your own DFIR stories...

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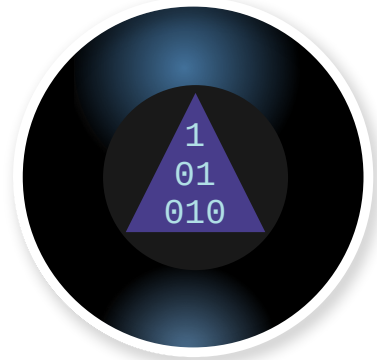
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**“Lend me your IR’s!”**

# Questions



Who?  
What?  
When?  
Where?  
Why?  
How?





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**Thank you for attending!**

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