Once you cross the onto precipice of the information security field the topic of security begins entering conversations more often than it should. I am not cynical, or in any way secretive, but It is not as if there is an abundance of people whom spend their time working to understand security trafficking my local breweries. But the topic is novel and exciting and thus of superficial interest to enough people that some are intrigued enough to ask questions whenever the chance arises. “What is the internet?”, “What’s the number one thing I should be doing to protect my home computer?”, “can you fix my entire home-network (for free in 15 minutes or less, while I’m making comments over your shoulder)?” are among the nearly limitless options that can arise. All these questions can illicit only one of two possible response patterns from me. The first option is a very lay response from me. This usually leads to a less than satisfactory analogy or a vastly oversimplified version of the truth. This results in a glossing over of all the hard work that goes into making computers work while simultaneously increasing the general users confidence that “it’s all just magic”. Path one usually leaves the question asker wondering why anyone would every pay for something I could explain in a 5 minute conversation in a bar with a bad analogy.

Path two, where I explain, to the best of my ability, what I understand about any particular random topic, also usually only last about 5 minutes. This time for a very different reason: it is too much foreign for a casual user and it is all so complicated. After about 5 minutes the user loses interest, they don’t understand the jargon, and they did not intend to jump so far into the deep-end when they asked the question in the first place. Just the idea of asking those questions for most might be a little like asking a brain surgeon about how to do surgery on the heart. This particular bad analogy hopefully illustrates how silly the question would sound to ask. But the fact remains people do not have some form of surgery functioning seamlessly Infront of them for large portions of their day. They do have computers. For most users’ computers just work, there is no need to understand them in any depth. For the majority of a computers usage this is a non-issue, but when it comes to securing computers and their networks this leads to some real issues. When people do not understand issues they tend to not take them very seriously and our issues in the information security field are pretty abstract. Understanding how to secure them require some understanding of what is plausible, and how it is possible. There are too many complex ideas to explain the need to simplify becomes very important. But how it is done needs to be done is a precise exercise in understanding where most users are and giving them exactly enough information to guide proper usage without providing too much.

It is also paramount to understand that casual use requires an ease of use. Convenience is what our world of computers is built around and that is what users have come to expect. When they are not met with convenience they tend to look elsewhere for solutions.

APA Citations

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