

HOME CYBER DEFENSE

ARE YOU SAFE FROM CYBER CRIME?

WEEKLY

Volume #4 - Issue #175

August 31st, 2018

This is a weekly publication dedicated to your personal cyber security. Our newsletter is designed to help the public recognize and avoid cyber threats while they are online. If you are not a subscriber, please go to HomeCyberDefense.net to sign up.

What Happens to your Online Accounts when You Pass Away



What happens to the numerous user logins you've accumulated after you die or become too infirm to manipulate a keyboard? Some people have a plan, the digital equivalent of living will, or have chosen "family"

option in a password management package such as LastPass or have entrusted a book of passwords to a family member.

But the consequences of doing nothing are not as neutral as some might expect and were spelled out during an informative presentation by Chris Boyd of Malwarebytes. The presentation, cheerily titled "The digital entropy of death", covered what could happen to your carefully curated online presence after you log off. In this newsletter we will highlight some of the information from this presentation.

Miscreants are already targeting obviously abandoned profiles. Boyd explained that in some cases it's easier for fraudsters to gain hold of these accounts than the account-holders' relatives, because crooks know the systems better and controls - although present - are often deeply embedded on the sites such as Facebook, Twitter et al. Alongside regular postings asking for help on Facebook due to compromise of dead people's logins there's also the problem of "cloning". Facebook users have reported receiving friend requests from accounts associated with dead friends and family members. Such requests appear to be the result of cloning or hacking scams that see criminals try to add people on the site, and then use that friendship as a way of stealing money from them or running other cons.

Social media accounts are, of course, just the tip of the iceberg. Most people these days run 100+ accounts, as figures from password management software apps show. These figures are only increasing over time. Some sites are managing the inevitability of their users shuffling off this mortal coil with features designed to deactivate accounts after months of inactivity or other features.

Many sites now offer a way for relatives and executors to memorialize, or just delete, an account. In other circumstances, services would rather you 'self-manage' and plan ahead for your own demise by setting a ticking timer. If the account is inactive for the specified length of time, then the account goes dormant

While a lot of services don't openly advertise what to do in the event of a death on their website, they will give advice should you contact them, whether social network, email service, or web host. When there's no option available, though, people will forge their own path and take care of their so-called 'digital estate planning' themselves. Users would be ill-advised to leave everything to their next of kin. Do some pre-handover diligence, and take some time to ensure everything is locked down tight. If there's anything hugely important you need your relatives to know, tell them in advance. People may have bought digital purchases tied to certain platforms. Games on Steam, or music on iTunes or Spotify. Legally, when you go, so do your files (in as much as anything you can't download and keep locally is gone forever). That's because you're buying into a license to use a thing, as opposed to buying the thing itself. There's nothing stopping someone from passing on a login to a family member so they can continue to make use of all the purchased content, at least for now. At some point, all of our digital accounts tied to financial purchases will have some sort of average human lifespan timer attached to them.

When planning your estate, don't forget about your digital life. As time passes, younger generations will demand reforms to internet life concerning the way we think about digital content, ownership, and inheritance. But until then, don't let someone else use your identity and good name after you are gone.

Thank you for subscribing to our email!



Copyright © 2015-2017 House of File Technologies