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Most impersonated brands in email attacks? Microsoft and Amazon

Nearly two-thirds of all advanced email attacks used emails impersonating Microsoft or Amazon, according to new research by Agari. Microsoft was impersonated in 36% of all (brand) display name impersonation attacks in the third quarter. Amazon was the second most commonly impersonated company, used in 27% of these attacks. Amazon and Microsoft run the largest public cloud computing platforms, which are widely used by companies undergoing digital transformation projects. The pattern was different for high-value targets, such as C-suite executives—Microsoft was impersonated in 71% of these attacks. Dropbox is a distant second at seven%, followed by UPS at six%. These attacks often take the form of service updates, security alerts and password resets. The ubiquity of Microsoft Office in corporate environments and the rapid adoption of cloud-based Office 365 makes Microsoft an attractive impersonation target, while file-sharing services such as Dropbox are frequently imitated to distribute malware because users are more likely to trust its installation. According to the FBI, business email compromise (BEC) has become a $12 billion scam. Advanced email attacks, such as BEC, leverage identity deception techniques, including domain name spoofing, look-alike domains and display name deception to take advantage of end-user trust. Legacy email security solutions, such as secure email gateways (SEGs), are unable to detect advanced email attacks because they do not include malicious URLs or malware attachments—the attacks Agari identified in its Q4 2018 report evaded detection by other email security solutions. Agari's new report reveals that 62% of advanced email attacks leverage display name deception: 54% impersonate trusted brands and eight% impersonate individuals. On the other end of the spectrum—yet alarmingly—three% of identity

deception-based attacks are sent from compromised email accounts commandeered through account takeover (ATO) attacks.