THE EMOTIONS OF A Social Engineering Attack

Why do people fall for social engineering attacks? Emotions. Cyber attackers work hard to exploit natural emotions such as fear, curiosity, helpfulness, greed, urgency, and more. They shape their tactics according to the feelings people have towards a certain situation.

Don't let your emotions get the best of you. Become cyber-aware instead. Familiarize yourself with the tactics cyber attackers use to stay ahead of a social engineering attack.

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<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>An unpleasant and often strong emotion triggered by anticipation or awareness of danger.</td>
<td>Account locked out due to excessive login attempts.</td>
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**EXAMPLES:**
- The email evokes fear of forgetting or missing something.
- The email evokes fear that you've done something wrong or will lose your job.

| Curiosity | A drive that leads to a nagging or insistent desire. | Threat actors often use curiosity to bait victims into seeking additional information or taking action. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- There's an ask to confirm details located in an attachment.
- There are claims that a payment has been sent.

| Helpfulness | The desire to be of service or assistance | Threat actors often target new employees for their high potential for helpfulness and desire to excel in their new job. Many people are taught to obey superior or authority, so new challenges the validity of requests. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- Your boss is asking for a favor.
- The email includes a request to help support efforts of a tragedy such as an earthquake or hurricane relief fund.

| Greed | The intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth or power | Social engineering campaigns that exploit greed may offer a reward, financial gain, or power. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- A Nigerian Prince offers an investment opportunity or a fortune they can't get out of the country without your help.
- An email sent to you includes an attachment with company financial details.

| Irritation | The state of feeling annoyed, impatient, or very angry | Persistence or distractions can make everyday tasks feel more annoying, leading to seem clicks or competing tasks without verification. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- You receive frequent requests to approve sign-ins or update software, also known as prompt bombing.
- Repeated spam emails with the intent that, eventually, enough amounts of contact will be compelling enough for the victim will click on the link.

| Urgency | Importance requiring swift action | Social engineering attacks almost always include a component of urgency. The goal is to get the victim to act before they think. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- There is an account locked out that needs your prompt attention.
- You receive an urgent request from your boss, who you can't reach at that time.

| Excitement | An emotional state marked by enjoyment, pleasure, or anticipation | Phishing attempts are often attractive to use as lures. |

**EXAMPLES:**
- Claims that your FedEx package is on its way that prompts you to click for tracking information.
- You receive a suspicious gift that you can easily examine.

Learn more about social engineering on our website.