Cyber Snapshot

Exploring and Assessing Current Topics

MICHIGAN CYBER COMMAND CENTER (MC3)

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Ego Searching

OVERVIEW

Ego searching (also known as ego surfing, vanity searching, or Googling yourself) is the practice of searching for one's own name, or pseudonym on a popular search engine in order to review the results. From a cyber security perspective, ego searching is a strongly suggested practice for both individuals and businesses alike. Cyber criminals are using publicly available online information to gather building blocks for social engineering or spear phishing campaigns. The Michigan Cyber Command Center (MC3) recommends routine ego searching at least every six months for personal identity protection, reputation management, and protecting one's organization.

WHAT TO SEARCH

Ego searching expands much further than just googling a name or business. Going beyond the name search, it is suggested to also search current and former email addresses, old social media account usernames, phone numbers, any potentially exposed personal identifiable information (PII), or publicly visible network devices and applications.

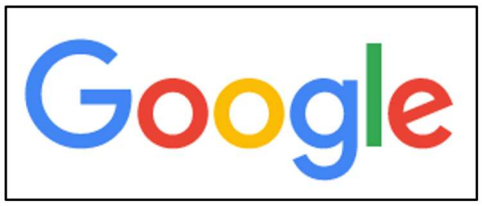

Image Source: google.com

Image Source: shodan.io

Image Source: censys.io

WHERE TO SEARCH

Checking an overall internet footprint for a person or business will include dozens of different avenues. Some key areas to search include open-source data provided by general search engines, all platforms of social media, online forums (on the clear and dark web), and any potentially leaked data on the dark web or public paste sites. The MC3 also highly recommends scanning for vulnerabilities in networks such as outdated firmware or publicly available devices or databases that should not be public, such as payroll records or webcams.

There are free, open-source tools able to scan for network vulnerabilities, like Shodan or Censys. Shodan is a search engine that searches the web for vulnerable and publicly accessible devices, such as webcams and routers, that are connected to the Internet. Censys is a search engine that allows individuals to find devices, networks, and infrastructures connected to the Internet as well as enables users to monitor how these connections have changed over time.

CAUTION

Be cognizant when searching for PII online and avoid unintentionally releasing data while conducting searches. Unintentionally releasing data can occur when inputting information such as social security numbers in a browser, search engine, or any untrusted area of the internet.

Any additional questions or concerns can be sent to the MC3, mc3@michigan.gov or 1-877-MI-CYBER.