

INTERNATIONAL RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT SKY SUBSCRIBER DOWNLOADS DAY

BY PAUL SIMPKINS

Bulletin board subscribers and Data Protection aficionados were quick to pick up this story which hit the headlines by serendipity on International Right to Know Day. A Law firm which pursues people who have downloaded material such as videos or music from the net without paying are in trouble for allowing names and addresses of such people (and sensitive details such as their taste in film) to be hacked from their website/offices and published on line for all to see. A search for sky leak will find many .

The Information Commissioner was interviewed live on BBC TV at 8-10 in the morning and intoned the right words (The question we will be asking is how secure was this information and how it was so easily accessed from outside, We'll be asking about the adequacy of encryption, the firewall, the training of staff and why that information was so public facing. I have significant power to take action and I can levy a fine of up to half a million pounds on companies that flout the Data Protection Act). See <http://tinyurl.com/35q5pan>

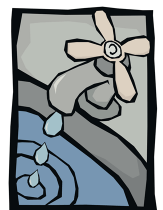
Links to an alleged downloader reveal an interview with "Claire" who never downloaded any porn videos and was very upset. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/11430299>



Computer geeks are not just jumping on the bandwagon - they are trampolining over issues such as "poorly configured network and Web server", " poster child for how NOT to handle sensitive business information." And UK ISPs are telling people how good they are and how poor the Law firm was. See <http://tinyurl.com/2v73qtv>

The law firm concerned didn't help their own case as it is alleged that they made hundreds of thousands of pounds "harassing" or "hounding" alleged downloaders by threatening a civil suit unless a financial "penalty" was paid. Their CEO made an ill judged public statement dismissing it as a storm in a T Cup and provoked the leakers into further leaks. Andrew Crossley, who runs ACS Law told a news channel: "We were the subject of a criminal attack to our systems. The business has and remains intact and is continuing to trade". Hmmm... Sky has already cut links and the credibility of the firm is now in question. A commentator on a bulletin board intimated "Never anger those who may have the technical skills to mount a serious attack on your systems". 4Chan and Pirate Bay (who helped in the leaking) are well known for their attitude and in the information age we live in have to be taken into account.

The whole story has all the ingredients (internet, porn, sky, pretty innocent girls, file sharing, bluff CEO, hounding people for money, vast profits for law firm etc) to run for a long time. Even the BBC's correspondent has blogged about the issue and related it to the Digital Economy Act asking questions about whether sky subscribers had a right to privacy or whether the court order was necessary. <http://tinyurl.com/34cqoaz>



Most papers and magazines are running stories relating to this. The Guardian has a nice take with many links. <http://tinyurl.com/39y65ho>

Lessons to be learned? I think the next few days and weeks will see developments. Maybe the first £500,000 fine from the Commissioner. We shall see. DP practitioners might care to work out how many of the principles have been breached.

Hope you enjoyed International right to know day