YOUR PHISHING PROGRAM IS A WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY

Snake Oil? Summit 2023

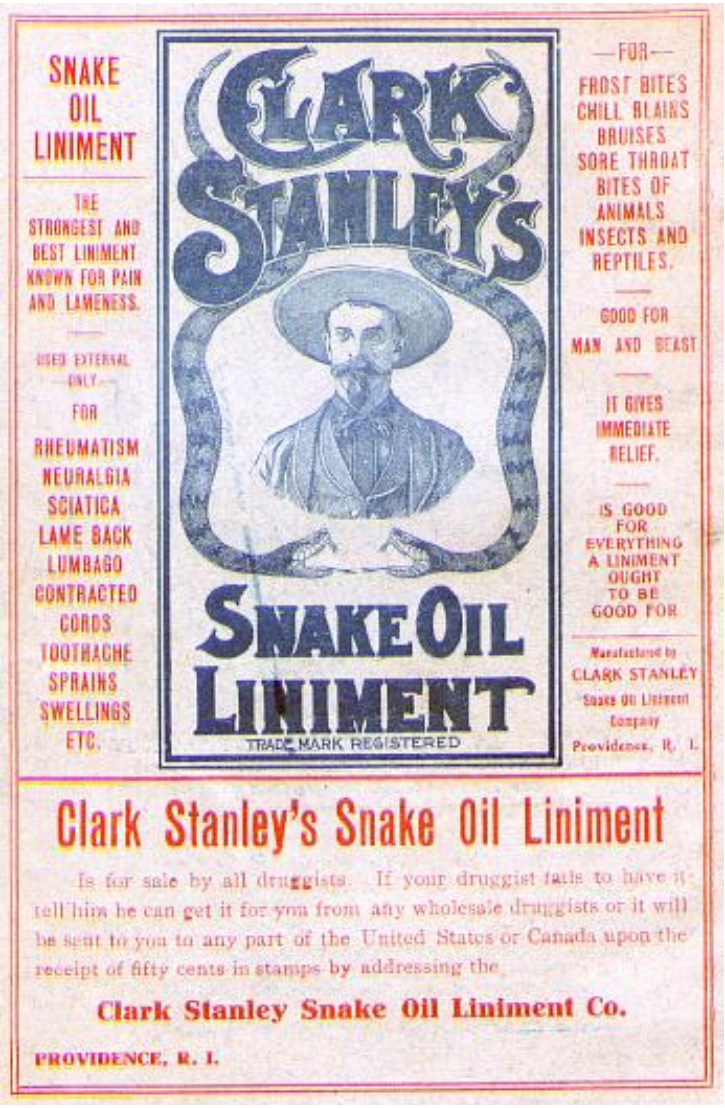
DISCLAIMER

I have intentionally left out any vendor references, as this is not a problem with a specific tool.

My beef is with the industry, or better yet, the subset of the industry that has let a checkbox compliance measure and vanity metrics derail many (most?) security programs.

AGENDA

- Current “Truth” in the Industry
- What does the data say?
- Snake Oil?
- Where to go from here?



INDUSTRY “TRUTHS”

Simulating phishing is an efficient way to test your employees' skills and measure their progress. A test provides data on which employees have been baited by the phishing email by clicking on the corresponding links. Your users can learn to identify suspicious emails and apply security awareness best practices by having the chance to experience a phishing attack.

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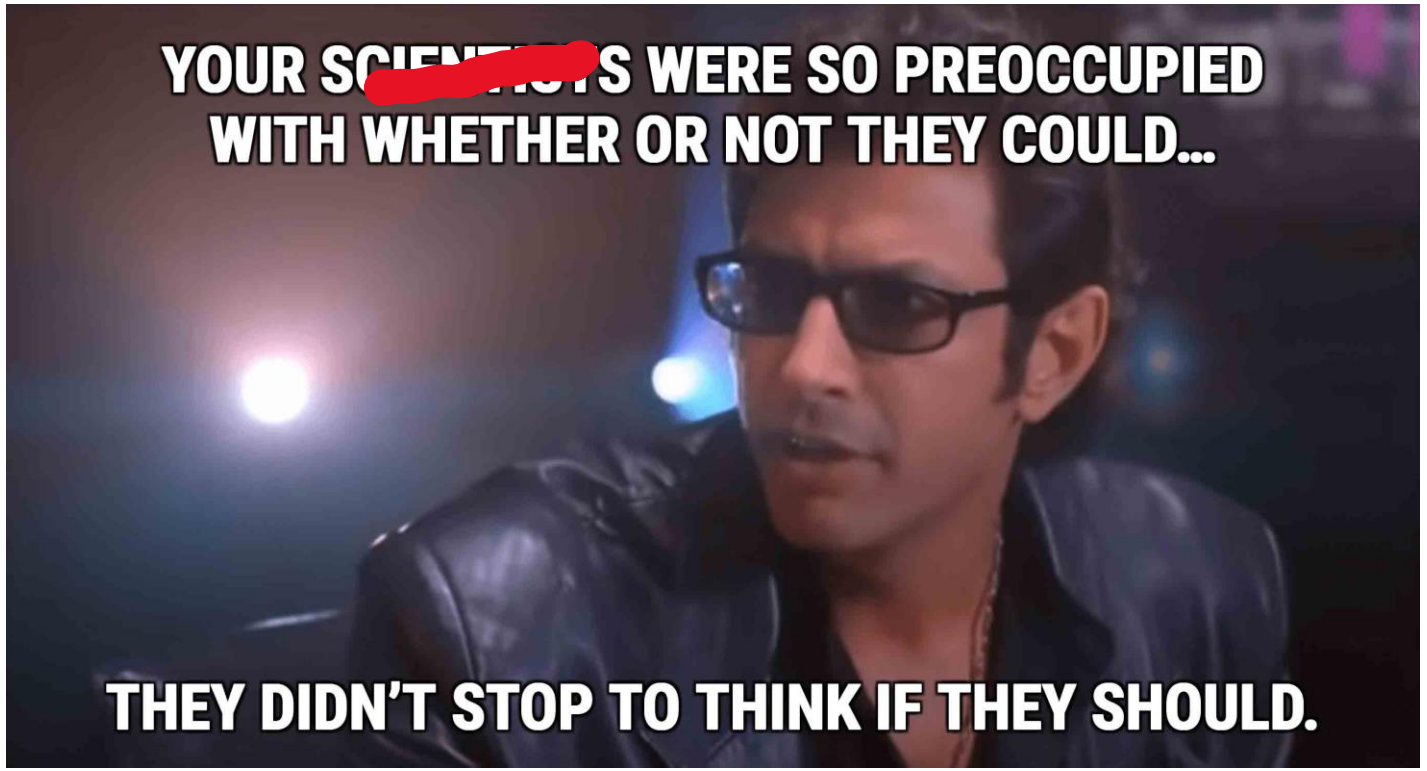
CYBERS



Most CISOs recognize the value of phish testing. By sending phishing emails generated by a company's IT department rather than a malicious attacker, **phishing simulation** provides insight into how well **phishing training** programs are working and which employees are most likely to be susceptible to a phishing email.

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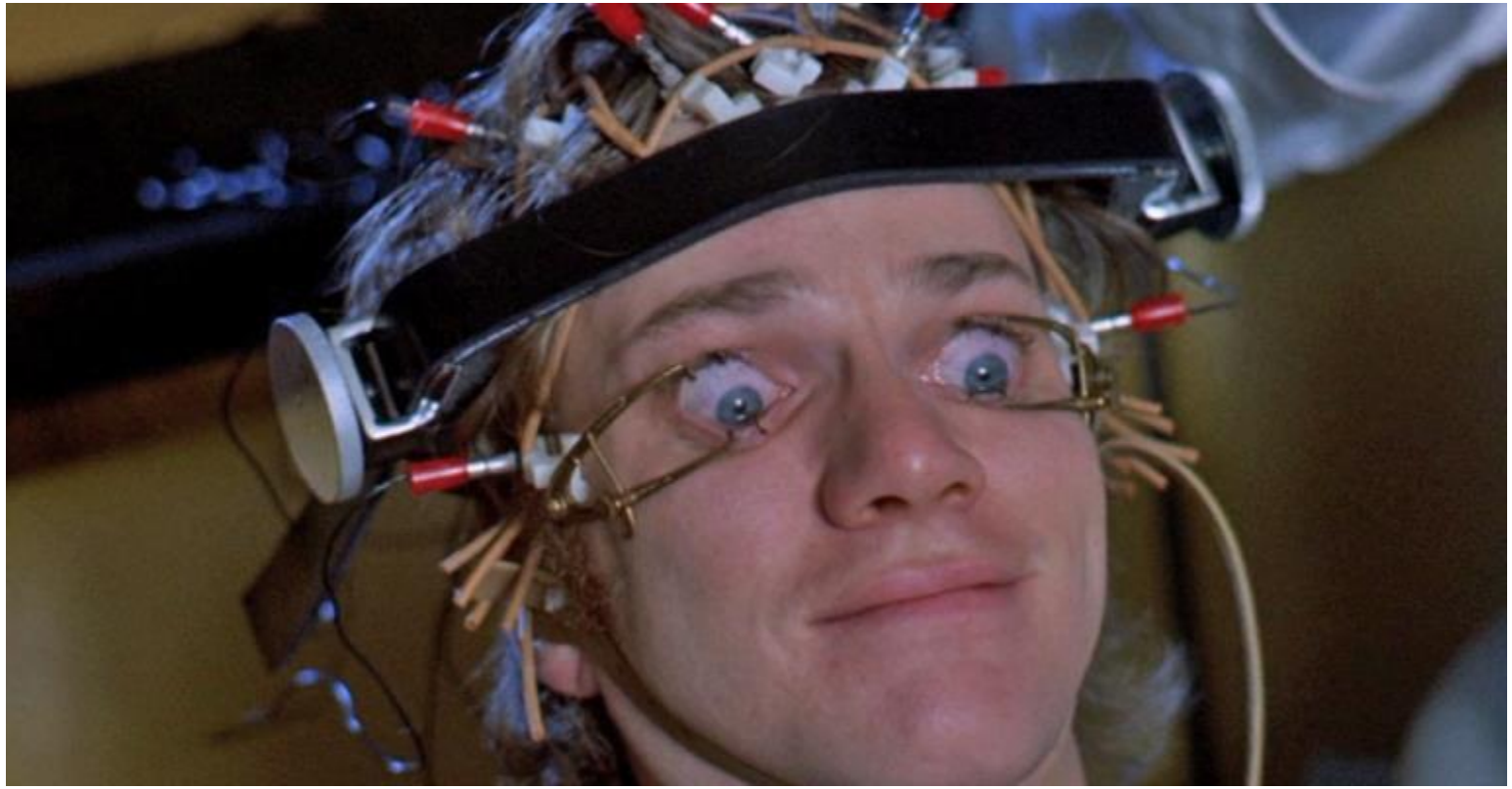


SNAKE OIL?

2023 DBIR

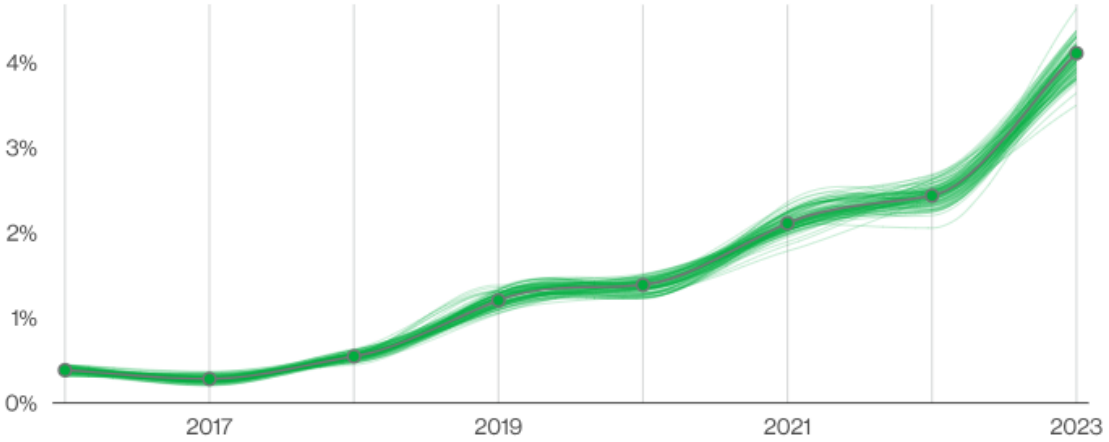


Figure 5. Pretexting incidents over time

Social Engineering attacks are often very effective and extremely lucrative for cybercriminals. Perhaps this is why Business Email Compromise (BEC) attacks (which are in essence pretexting attacks) have almost doubled across our entire incident dataset, as can be seen in Figure 5, and now represent more than 50% of incidents within the Social Engineering pattern.

https://www.verizon.com/business/resources/reports/dbir/2023/summary-of-findings/

2022 DBIR

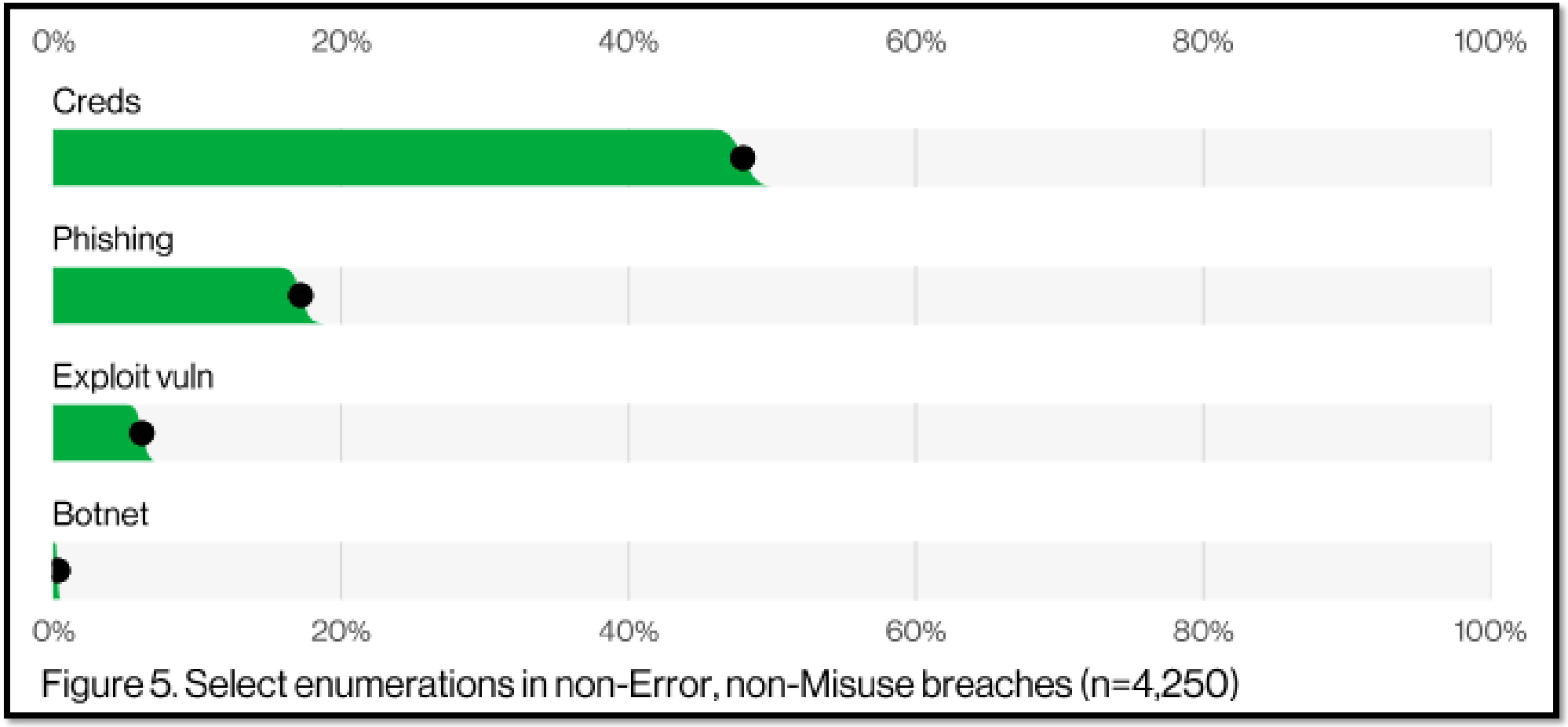


Figure 5. Select enumerations in non-Error, non-Misuse breaches (n=4,250)

https://www.verizon.com/business/resources/reports/dbir/2022/summary-of-findings/

2021 DBIR

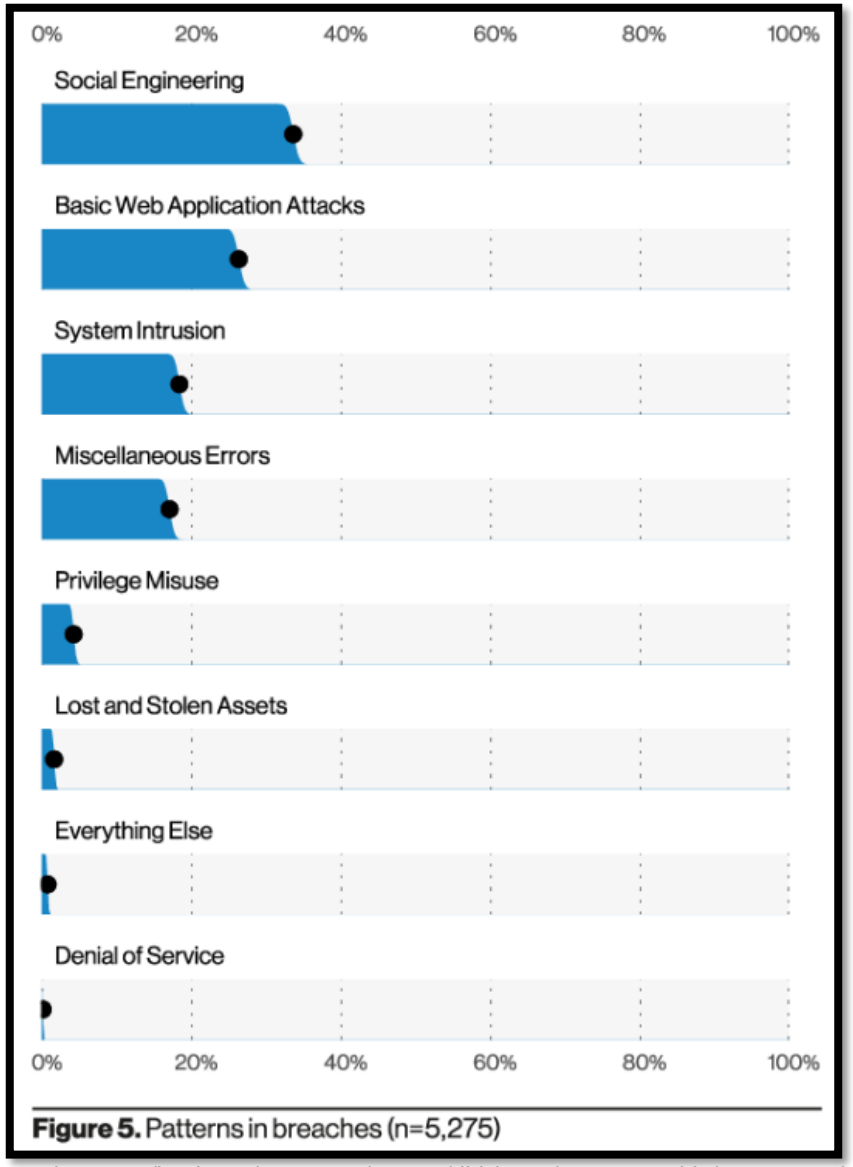
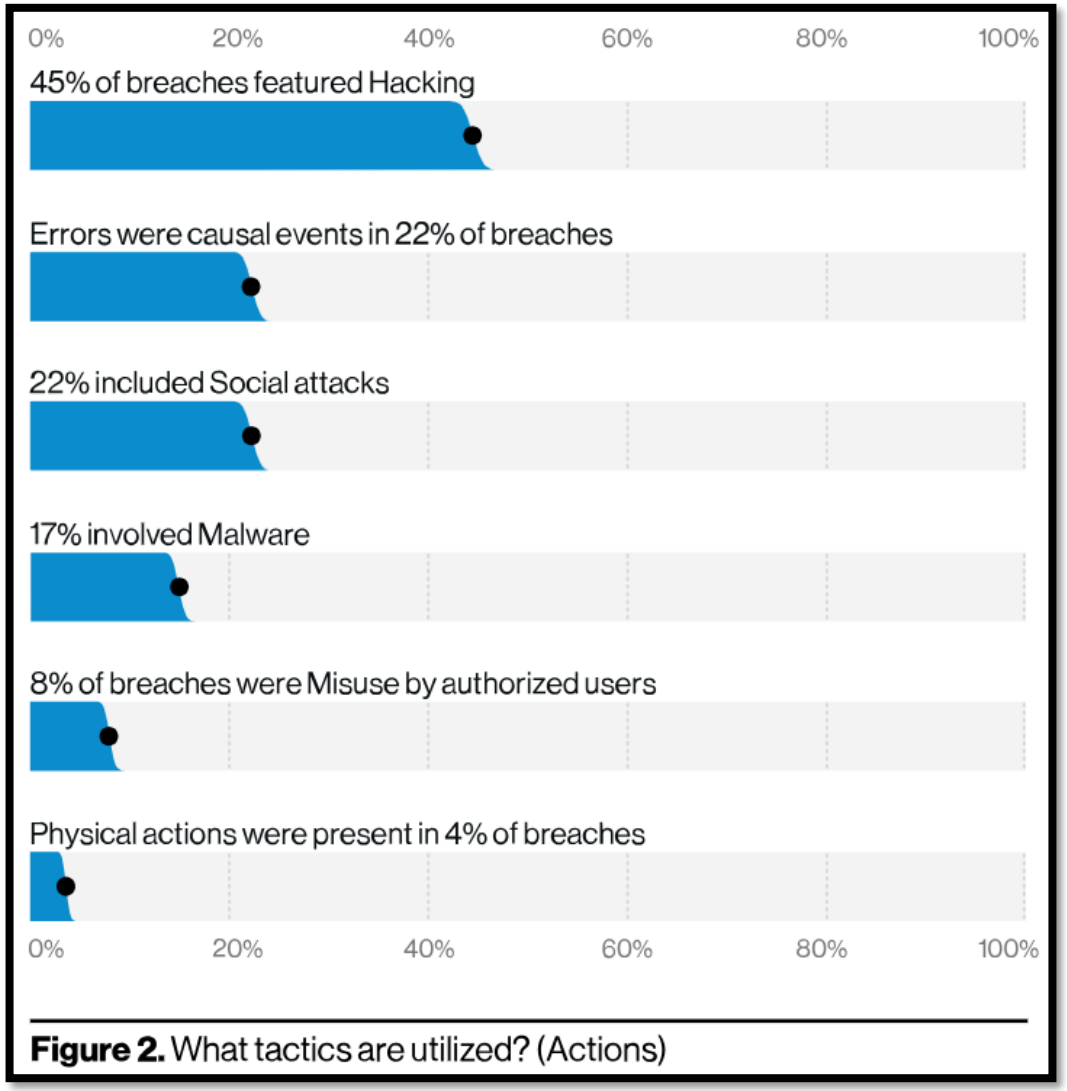


Figure 5. Patterns in breaches (n=5,275)

https://www.verizon.com/business/resources/reports/dbir/2021/masters-guide/summary-of-findings/

2020 DBIR



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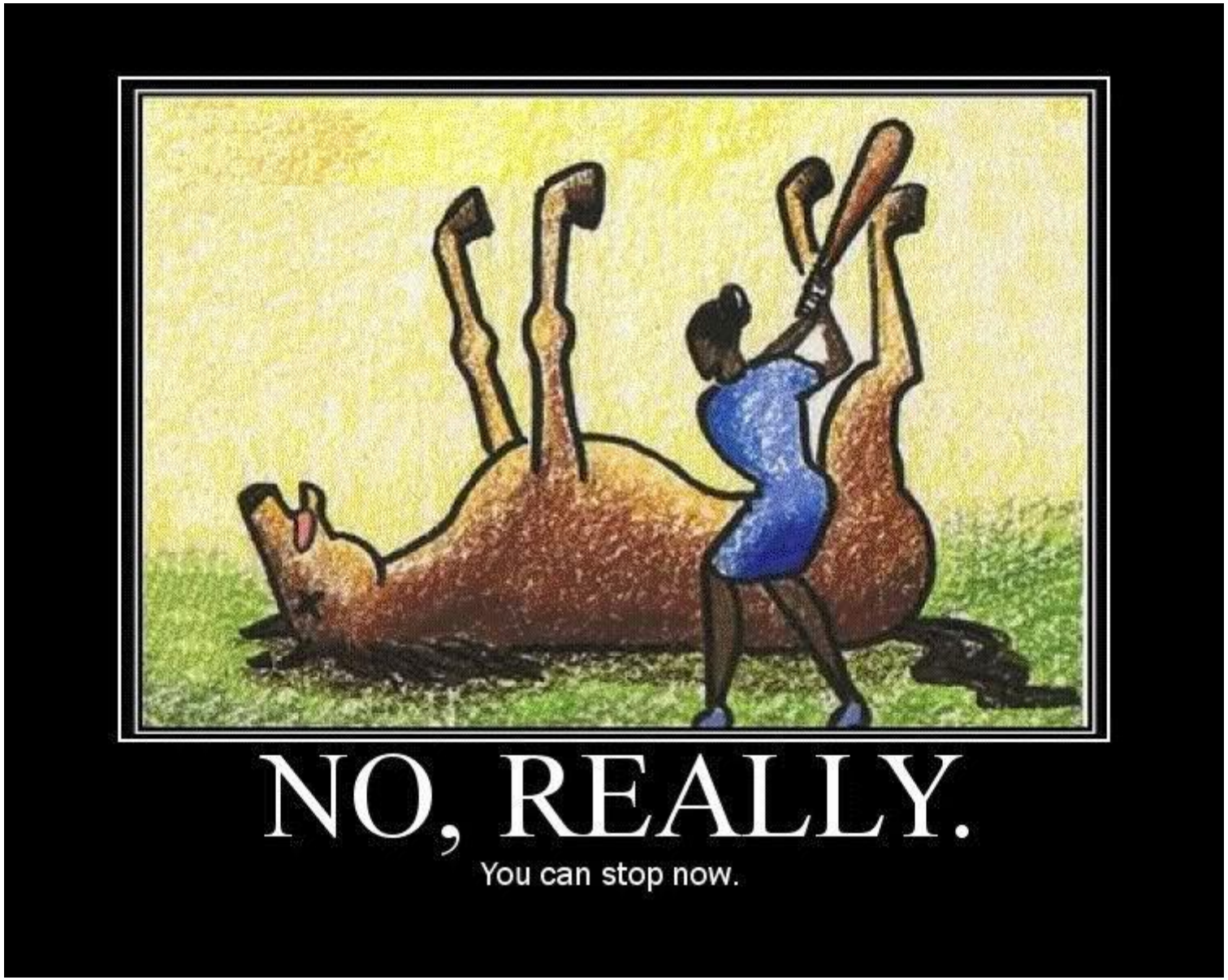

So….SNAKE OIL?

YES - IF

- Program is designed to make people aware of how to spot a phishing email
- Program focuses on vanity metrics
- Program lacks **context**

MOVING FORWARD

WHO CLICKED?

- "10% of users clicked the last phishing test email"
- Who cares?
  - Really.
- If the email gets to the right person at the right time they will click
- Vanity metrics totally miss the mark
  - If you get 0% clicks, the test is probably not realistic
  - If you put in the effort, you could approach 100% clicks

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

- What is the time difference between the first “fail” and the first report?
  - Get the IR started!
- How many “fails” happed after the first report?
  - Even better to compare to your response time to real reports
- Assuming training focuses on reporting – how many recipients reported? Is this trending in the right direction?
- How many non-test true-positive phishes are being reported?

CHANGING BEHAVIORS

- Focus on realistic end-user actions – they're not all cyber experts
- We've tried the stick for years – let's try the carrot now
- You must continually check the tests against real world
  - Scenario
  - Tactics
  - RESULTS

CLOSING THOUGHTS

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Stop focusing on WHO clicked
  - This is the new “our FW blocked 10,000,000 attacks last month”
- Identify the actions you want changed and build processes to reinforce them
  - Stop saying “don’t click” – you might as well say “stop using email”
- Measure results against REAL attacks
  - We all get bombarded with phishing emails

QUESTIONS

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