



NEWS RELEASE

Beware of ATM Fraudsters During the Holidays

Free Dec. 14 “Hacking the Human” webinar to address sneaky ways hackers compromise ATM machines

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Dec. 6, 2017) – In the not-so-distant future, ATM cards may be obsolete, but for now, especially during the holiday season, consumers need to take extra care when using their ATM cards to make a bank transaction.

The number of ATMs with compromised security [increased sixfold](#) in 2015 over the previous year, according to the FICO Card Alert Service, and that number is likely higher this year as sophisticated and low-tech criminals employ a variety of tactics to access cash and withdraw funds from private bank accounts.

Michael Cocanower, president and CEO of Phoenix-based itSynergy, will conduct a free, 15-minute **“ATM Security” webinar** on Thursday, December 14 at 11:30 a.m. Participants will learn about the types of attacks criminals can launch against an ATM machine, how to recognize if a machine has been compromised and steps for protecting personal bank account information. Interested participants should register at <http://www.itsynergy.com/webinar>.

Cocanower said that as people are out shopping for holiday gifts, they should look for physical clues of malicious activity when using ATM machines.

“It’s more common for thieves to try to compromise the machine physically, so look for anything that looks ‘off’ or doesn’t look like it belongs or fits right – that’s often a sign of compromise,” said Cocanower, who has been recognized nationally and locally for his IT expertise. “You also can look for any signs of tampering – not just on the front but all around the ATM. Finally, look for any external signs of wireless communication, such as antennas, as thieves will sometimes use that to gather the data from the ATM without having to physically touch it again.”

One way to reduce risk is to use an ATM from a large established bank at that bank’s location.

“Private ATM machines in stores and clubs are far more likely to be compromised,” he said.

Once an ATM card and PIN number is compromised, it can be immediately transmitted to a criminal network.

“They can create a duplicate ATM card and withdrawal cash within a few minutes of you using a compromised ATM. These withdrawals are often done in other countries and are also often done by paid ‘mules’ who the criminals hire to do the actual withdrawal in exchange for a cut of the proceeds,” he said.

Fortunately, most banks will reimburse stolen funds from their own ATM machines, but if there is a delay in reporting the theft, you may have to pay a fee. In addition, the time to restore funds can be significant. Also, if the theft was from a different entity’s ATM machine, you may be out of luck.

The “Hacking the Human” webinars take place at 11:30 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The webinars are geared towards non-technical end users in business at any level in the company. Each webinar provides useful tips to ward off cyberattacks and more complex social engineering schemes that result in theft and corporate espionage.

The 2018 schedule of webinars will be released soon. For more information, call itSynergy at (602) 297-2400 or visit www.itsynergy.com.

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About Michael Cocanower, President and CEO of itSynergy

He has his black belt in the Kung Sul division of Hwa Rang Do, a Korean martial art, so it's fitting that Michael Cocanower's passion is helping small and medium-sized businesses defend themselves against malicious cyber intruders. A Phoenix native, Cocanower founded itSynergy in 1997, and under his leadership, the company has experienced exponential revenue growth. A long-standing Microsoft Partner, itSynergy provides strategic technology management services for small and mid-sized organizations on a fixed monthly fee. Cocanower has received numerous awards and widespread industry recognition throughout his career, including being named one of 20/20 Visionaries in *Channel Pro Network* magazine's May 2016 issue. The magazine regularly turns to him for input on current IT trends, and called him a “shrewd and articulate observer of the SMB market.” In addition, the Arizona chapter of Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) recently appointed Cocanower to the board of directors as membership chair.

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