

/dev/random Buying Snake Oil

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While I only stood in line for about 45 minutes in order to accomplish it—as opposed to camping for a day or two in a butt-grabber nylon chair on the sidewalk—I got my iPhone 6 today. (Today being September 22, no matter what *your* calendar says; we’ve talked about publishing relativity before.) I only got the 16 GB version and not the Plus model, either, but announcing this cherry acquisition is not my *raison d’être* here.

As I was biding my time in the store I wandered over and started playing with a Surface Pro 3. Completely contrary to my expectations, I really liked the feel and functionality of the thing. I may just have to get one if my novels ever start to sell the way my publisher assures me will happen (seconds before the mile-wide asteroid that got by NASA impacts). Of course, if the Surface ran, say, Ubuntu it would be even better (yes, I’ve seen the *Geek* article on accomplishing this). I fondled it for a while and then in order to express my profound amazement at having enjoyed the experience bought *Minecraft* for the Xbox 360. I’m sure the logic in this is obvious to you all.

Moving on, I recently stumbled across this parody ad I wrote some years ago: I suspect merely to drain a modicum of anger from my psyche, as I do that from time to time. It’s rather dated—you can tell by the “geek code” reference—but it nevertheless conveys a sentiment I still believe to be valid. If there *is* a “Carpe Diem (In)Security Systems,” out there now, by the way, I can’t imagine *what* you were thinking. It isn’t about you, anyway, so don’t get your knickers in a knot.

If you’re offended by something in this little diatribe, get over it now, before you even start reading. Satire is *supposed* to be offensive, or at least aggressively thought-provoking: That’s how it gets its point across. There was a time when I produced pretty much nothing but satire and parody. One of my friends, an accomplished poet, even went so far as to call me a “Master of Parody.” I probably wouldn’t go that far unless you encouraged me (twist my arm: please), but I do remember wanting very much to write for the *Harvard Lampoon* as a teen, until I found out you had to go to, well, *Harvard* to do that. I could barely afford the local junior college, much less an Ivy League school.

This fictitious ad reveals my own mental state rather than shining any critical light on the security industry at the time, admittedly, but there are some telling depths to be plumbed. For example, the Philip K. Dick reference to arresting people for what they were thinking ensures that this was written after 9/11 because prior to that I considered the “PreCrime” concept to be pure, rather absurd, science fiction. Once we started passing classified laws that average citizens weren’t even allowed to know about, much less defend themselves against when charged, I reassessed that evaluation and came to the conclusion that PKD was, rather than simply mad, disturbingly prescient as well.

Does the Psychic Network even *exist* anymore? They should have seen that coming...

CD(I)SS Announces PVA: The Future of Digital Defense

It is with considerable pride, anticipation of media coverage, and downright old-fashioned avaricious glee that we here at Carpe Diem (In) Security Systems announce a major breakthrough in vulnerability reporting. For years the software industry has relied upon the hopelessly outdated reactive paradigm, in which independent investigators spend many long hours combing through source code looking for unbounded variables or hitting new releases of software with everything including the kitchen sink in an attempt to lay bare a potential weakness and thus make a name for themselves in the voracious canine-consume-canine world of People Who Call Themselves Infosec Experts. But now, thanks to the amazing skills of our 7337 h4x0r squad at CD(I)SS, we have taken that tired old paradigm to new, never-before-imagined heights.

After years of tedious and meticulous labor, the men, women, et Al (we had to let Al tag along, as his mom won't be home until 5:30) of CD(I)SS have developed the Preemptive Vulnerability Announcement (PVA). Taking our cue from time-honored traditions such as arresting people because they *might* be *thinking* about committing a crime, our team of slavishly devoted security analysts with no discernible personal lives have devised a method for evaluating the security posture of software *before it is even written*.

Yes, by boosting the latent psychic abilities of our analysts with a secret blend of eleven herbs and spices (with emphasis on the herbs), CD(I)SS is able to foresee and release vulnerability reports *before the software's designers*

commit the first line of code. Not only will we spell out all of the security flaws in the future product, subscribers to our Platinum Iridium Gallium Arsenide Service will receive a patch that can be applied to the code when it is finally released, no matter what language is used. The odds are it won't provide any useful function, but you'll probably never know that. Why? Because, as it proudly says in our Mission Statement, *People are Stupid*. (Fond nod to Terry Goodkind.)

How can we offer such incredible service to our customers? It's simple, really. We know from expensive but questionable market surveys that many of you patronize the Psychic Network, make theologically and ethically shaky televangelists nevertheless wealthy, and believe those commercials that insist you must call within the next 10 minutes or you won't receive, absolutely free, a second 12-ounce bottle of Oxy-Stain (with free disposable container): Not Sold in Any Store. With that kind of consumer gullibility already in place, making the jump to PVAs was child's play. It was certainly the next logical development—but it remained for our dedicated group of 7377 h4x0rs to take that profitable step. Did we mention that we hire only pure-bred, soda-swilling, certified 7377 h4x0rs? Your geek code must be at least 256 characters long even to get an interview.

Best of all, no one will ever again scoop us (or our investors) on a vulnerability announcement. If that doesn't give you a warm fuzzy, there's something wrong with you. But then, if you're willing to accept our claims at face value, that pretty much goes without saying.

CD(I)SS: Where your credulity is money in our bank.