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Article

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Does hacking make me a criminal?

What do you think when you hear the word 'Hacker'? We're guessing a scary figure behind a computer screen; hoodie up, mask on, hiding behind the anonymity of a virtual world.

As an information security consultant, I am surrounded by hackers every day and I can assure you that these stereotypes are simply just that – stereotypes.

My colleagues and I are not scary, hooded figures hiding behind computer screens, in fact we're all rather ordinary people with families, friends, and hobbies.

We are quick to think of hackers as the bad guys who are trying to steal your data, when more often than not, this isn't the case.

Stereotype much?

In an attempt to move away from the stereotype of all hackers being bad, you often hear the term 'Ethical Hacker' being used, but this term raises the question of why we add the word 'ethical' at all.

I have a degree in Ethical Hacking but let's imagine I trained as a doctor instead; you wouldn't call me an Ethical Doctor.

No other industry requires its members to make an effort to distinguish between ethical and unethical. The use of the term 'hacker' when referring to someone that commits a crime online can be found throughout popular culture in articles, social media, tv shows and movies, but the actual definition is: "an expert who uses their technical knowledge to achieve a goal or overcome an obstacle, within a computerised system by non-standard means."

What do hackers do?

Hackers play a critical role in keeping people and companies safe.

Cyber security professionals, consultants, and technical experts use their knowledge and expertise to test the level of cyber security in any given company, and by doing so identify potential threats and weaknesses.

Not only that, but many hackers also spend their time looking at the rules and regulations behind information security in order to help organisations to better understand their threats, and how to put mitigations and controls in place.

This misrepresented group of individuals work to protect all aspects of the online world many of us have become acquainted with.

What about the bad guys?

An alternate term for someone who commits a crime online is a Cyber Criminal or Cyber Attacker.

Hacking itself is NOT a crime, but the intent behind an individual's reason to hack is what may lead to crime.

An unethical doctor would be called a murderer, an unethical banker a thief, and an unethical entrepreneur a fraudster.

So, the next time you think about hackers, just remember we aren't all bad.

#HackingIsNotACrime

Click here to find out more about our cyber security team and how they can support your business.

To chat to Sarah, and find out more about how she became a hacker, visit our team page.