

Security for Receptionists (A Question a Day)

Receptionists (used in a broader sense than what you're probably used to) are one of a business' first lines of defense against security breaches. Often, receptionists or the reception area are the targets of social engineering attempts and physical facilities penetration attempts.

My intention with this project is to collect 365 or more comprehensive security related questions appropriate for interviewing applicants for a receptionist position, such as a literal receptionist, security guard, or shipping and receiving personell, or simply used to keep your current receptionist staff sharp by presenting them with a "question-a-day" describing a security situation or dilemma that they can relate to.

Question submissions from the community are welcome! If you have a question or delimma that you feel would be good for this archive, please send it and it's answer, along with any other supporting information you may have (pesonal stories, examples, etc.) to dtrammell (at) dustintrammell (dot) com.

Question 001:

Q: What do you do when a pizza delivery guy arrives to deliver a pizza to someone inside the company?

A: Call the person it's being delivered for to the reception area to meet the delivery person. If they have a large delivery or insist on handling the delivery to the destination location themselves, escort them yourself or call someone appropriate to escort them. Never allow a delivery person past the reception area unescorted, and they should be escorted at ALL times.

Risk: Unattended visitors inside your building could do any number of things such as sit down at a computer terminal, steal paperwork, take pictures of sensitive documents or models, or make unauthorized phone calls from the office telephony equipment.

Question 002:

Q: What do you do if you need to leave the reception area but there are people waiting in the reception area?

A: You should always try to stay in the reception area while a visitor is waiting. If you must leave for any reason, it's important that you find someone else who can sit at the front desk while you are away.

Risk: Leaving visitors alone in a reception area can be a security risk. Unattended visitors may go behind the receptionist desk to find sensitive files, access the receptionist's computer or phone, or even steal things from the reception area.

Question 003:

Q: What do you do if someone calls you on the phone and requests that you assist them in making a telephone call?

A: Always verify the identity of the caller and that they have the authorization to make the request they are making. If the request is against company policy, always refuse to assist the person.

Risk: Social Engineers use their conversational skills to convince unsuspecting victims into forwarding fraudulent telephone calls through their phone systems. Often posing as internal staff or executive management, callers such as malicious hackers, prison inmates, and call/sell operators use these techniques to avoid paying for telecommunications services, instead causing the cost to be incurred by the businesses they are scamming.

Question 004:

Q: What should you do if you find abandoned or lost media such as floppy disks, CD-ROMs, or USB Flash Drives in or around the reception area or outside of the building?

A: By all means, NEVER put the media into your computer! Submit the media to your Network Security or IT department so that they may safely inspect the data on the drive without risk of the company's network being exposed to malicious programs, worms, or viruses which may be present on the media.

Risk: Multiple risks apply to found media. In addition to the possibility of the media containing viruses or worms which could infect and spread through your company's network from the inside, Social Engineers are now using this technique to plant trojan horse applications within companies to harvest and transmit sensitive information from the inside of the company. Social Engineers employing this technique rely on unsuspecting employees who are irresponsible enough to insert untrusted media they find on the street, in the elevator, or in the parking lot directly into their company workstations without first inspecting it securely.

Question 005:

Q: What should you do if a delivery person arrives to restock vending machines or deliver additional water bottles for the water cooler?

A: Do NOT allow the delivery person anywhere beyond the reception area without an escort. If you cannot escort the delivery person yourself, call someone appropriate to escort them or who can attend to the reception area while you escort them yourself. Never leave a delivery person unattended.

Risk: Unattended visitors inside your building could do any number of things such as sit down at a computer terminal, steal paperwork, take pictures of sensitive documents or models, or make unauthorized phone calls from the office telephony equipment.