

Podcast Transcript: Cyber Security: You are Not Alone



Cärin Viertel:

Hello. I'm Cärin Viertel, Director of Client Services at JNBA Financial Advisors based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Thanks for joining us for this podcast from the JNBA Studio.

Today, we're talking about cyber scams. There are many types of scams, very sophisticated scams that, unfortunately, trick millions of people every year. If this has happened to you, you are not alone. Today, we'll hear from someone who was targeted, Roger Lind, who also happens to be my dad, and we'll also hear from an expert on cybersecurity, Brent Morris. Brent is from Success Computer Consulting, an IT firm and trusted business partner of JNBA Financial Advisors.

Brent, we'll start with you. How big is the scamming industry?

Brent Morris:

Cärin, thanks for having me on the podcast. According to AARP, three in 10 U.S. adults over age 45 know of somebody who has lost money to a scammer fraud and, even more frighteningly, the FBI shared last year in 2022 that individuals over the age of 60 lost over \$3 billion to scammers. That was B, billions.

Cärin Viertel:

That is a lot, a lot of money.

Brent Morris:

Yeah. It really truly has evolved into an illegitimate business. Think of this like sophisticated organizations, sophisticated people that have gotten together and have developed a business around tricking people and stealing money. They've made it easy for people that don't necessarily have technical skills. Even five, seven years ago, if you're familiar with what Craigslist is, there is a similar site for people who want to do bad things. If you don't have technical skills and you just want to steal, you can find these sites and hire people to do the work for you. It's become easier and it's gotten bigger.

Cärin Viertel:

Well, it is unfortunate, but the reason we're here today is to talk about what is happening and create awareness of these different kind of scams that are out there. Thank you to my dad who, unfortunately, was the target of a scam, but was willing to share his story with us so that we can learn from what happened to you.

Can you walk through that with us, dad?

Roger Lind:

Yes, I will. I was working on the computer one evening, and I was busy and, all of a sudden, my computer froze up, and along came a picture on the screen. It was a Microsoft picture. It looked very professional, and it says, "You have a problem on your computer, and we can work your way out of it." I kept asking myself, "Is this a scam?" I asked myself many times when I was doing this process. I was in a hurry, and so I contacted them, and they were solving my problem and they needed a check to put the program that they had on my computer and so I wouldn't have this

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problem again. I thought to myself, now, I had several different checking accounts, so I'll use one that I don't use that often, and I said to myself, "I'll use that one because, if this is a scam, there's not going to be any money for them to go after and I can close it down."

Well, we went through the process, and I kept asking myself a question. Is this a scam? We got the problem solved that night. I think I wrote a check for about 500-and-some dollars. They took a picture of it and they were going to run the process through. During the whole process, I was keeping notes of what was happening and what was on the screen in front of me. The next morning, I called my computer person, and he says, "You've been scammed. Bring your computer in and we'll clean up your computer." When I came in, he said, "What account did you write the check out of?" and I said, "Yeah, this account." He said, "Go stop it."

I said, "I'm going to close the whole account out because I didn't have automatic transactions coming out of that account." I went to the bank and closed that account out and felt good because they can't get back in, but then they contact you and they say, "Now we're going to have a judgment on you because you didn't pay your bill." I said, "That's okay. I've already contacted the attorney general in Iowa. I've sent them all the documentation that I had, and they said, 'They will be contacting you,'" and we never heard from them again. The attorney general was very gracious and helped me through the process. I filled out a little form. They contacted them, and they didn't hear nothing. The money I was out was having the computer person clean up my computer.

Cärin Viertel:

Wow. Thanks for sharing that, dad.

That is an example, isn't it, Brent, of just a very sophisticated, to your point earlier, well-thought-out team trying to get access to people's money basically.

Brent Morris:

Yeah. They appeal to human emotion. It sounded like, Roger, you got something that caused a little bit of fear, "Something is wrong with my computer," and they prompted you to call somebody, and you had a really helpful person on the end of the line willing to walk you through the process, even though you had your antenna up and thought this might be a scam. They were likely so helpful at first that it seemed like it was a legitimate thing. Is that a fair assumption?

Roger Lind:

That is very, very fair. I was embarrassed about the whole situation. I had to go to the bank where I worked once and say, "I got scammed, and I need to close an account out," and then, a couple of days later, I went to the doctor's office visiting with the doctor and said, "I got scammed" "How'd you do it? How did it happen?" I explained to him, and he said... and she said, "The same thing happened to me. I was busy that night. I had kids. I had work to get done. I needed to get it going again and I fell for it," she said.

The one point that the computer person gave me was down in your left-hand corner of my screen. This is the first time I'd ever heard that. They had a phone number on there. He said, "Type in the phone number and Google it." It came up a scam. I learned something that night, to do something positive, to type that phone number down the bottom left-hand corner of my computer, and I got an answer.

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Brent Morris:

Yeah. Roger, it seems like you're a good man. You've had a great career and you're trying to enjoy life, and you get suckered into something. You said something that I think is really important to address. It sounds like you felt embarrassed, and having to deal with this was somewhat humbling, I would assume.

Roger Lind:

Yes, it was. My question, when Cärin asked me if I wanted to be on this program to say something about it, "You want to talk about something that you goofed up on bad?" and then I thought about it, and I said, "Well, my doctor got scammed by the same thing. There's other people it's happening, too. I saw people when I was at the bank. They're getting scammed from different processes." I learned something from this process of typing down in the corner and be very, very cautious. They'll contact you back again, and that's okay to say no and just walk away and reboot.

Brent Morris:

I just want to applaud your courage in talking about this because one of the biggest problems we have in cybersecurity is, because of the way it makes us feel, we're embarrassed, we don't want to talk about it. The fact that you're willing to talk about it and share your experience is going to save somebody else from going through the very same thing. I just want to say thank you and just want to applaud your courage.

Cärin Viertel:

Couldn't agree more. Couldn't agree more. Actually, when we were talking about this, about whether he would be willing to share his story with our listeners today, part of the process, too, was to get to this stage was, unfortunately, that statistic that you shared earlier, Brent, about, what is it, three in 10 Americans know someone who's lost money to this, well, I know four. I mean, I think and I know I personally get those emails, too, in my personal inbox. We all do, and my son loss he thought he was getting an NBA jersey that never showed up. I mean, the scammers don't discriminate. They take advantage of people at the vulnerable points. It's worth the conversation.

Brent Morris:

Well, yeah, and here's an important thing to acknowledge. The best of us get breached. I've got many stories of people that are in cybersecurity, that know all this stuff that have been hacked. Just to humble myself a little bit, I talk about cybersecurity a lot in our community to a lot of business people, and there was a conference that I was doing in the fall where I talked about this very thing, and I go back to my office and I beat my chest arrogantly that I've never been tricked and, literally, two weeks later, I'm in my bed on a Saturday morning preparing for a meeting that I had on Monday and I got an email about something that I typically dragged my feet on, and that's about approving an employee manual. I thought, "I'm going to get this done for the first time fast," when I'm prompted to do it and I clicked on the link. I clicked on the link. I put my username and password in, and it doesn't go through. I do it two more times.

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Literally, the thing I tell people not to do, I did. I don't mean to pretend I'm the best of us, but what I mean to say is I know this stuff really well and I got hit. Now, thankfully, we as a business have the right protections in place where it didn't cause an issue, but I got tricked and other people do, too.

Cärin Viertel:

We talked earlier in our previous podcast about taking control of the situation the best that you can, and there's three action words that you shared with our listeners. Actually, my dad did some of these steps, but can you share that in this podcast, too?

Brent Morris:

Sure. The three words are pause, think, act. If you think about the PTA acronym, maybe this is a more actionable one. It doesn't create so much anxiety as our school days did when we get to go to PTA events, but pause, think, act. Just slow down when you get something take a minute to think. Is this something that I should be receiving? How important is this? Slow down, and then the act part of it really is sometimes doing nothing. More often, it might be to reach out to somebody that you know and trust, that understands the stuff that might have an objective perspective and not as emotionally engaged as you might be. Those are the things that we want to encourage people to do.

We mentioned we're in a right-now society and we just want to get things done. Roger, you brought up a really good point. They catch you at a time when you've got other things going on. They prey on your busyness or your stress, and that oftentimes prompts us to do things we wouldn't otherwise do. We just want to encourage people just to slow down, think about what they're getting and then act a little more slowly.

Cärin Viertel:

Very good advice. Next time on our podcast from the JNBA Studio, we'll hear more tips and tricks to protect yourself and your personal information from cyber scams.

Thank you, dad. Thank you, Brent, for sharing your experiences and insights today, and thank you to our listeners for taking time to learn more about this and protecting yourself from these scams. If you'd like more information, visit our website, jnba.com, and click on the insights tab.

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