

The Cloud: Still A Work In Progress

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The cloud computing "ecosystem" failed Mat Homan, and his plight should serve to remind individuals and companies that store sensitive data in "the cloud" that the technology (while oozing with upside and potential) remains very much a work in progress.

It turns out your digital identity can be a rather fluid concept these days.

That shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone, given the increased prevalence of security incidents and high-profile hacks that take place today. But once in awhile the details of someone's hacking story are cause for serious examination and concern. Technology blogger Mat Homan is the subject of [one such story](#) [1].

Homan's digital identity came under attack late last week. His Google account was taken over and deleted. Then someone assumed control of his Twitter account. Lastly, Homan's AppleID was compromised, allowing someone to erase everything off his iPhone, iPad, and MacBook computer.

The attack more or less transpired over the course of one hour, preventing Homan from realizing something was terribly, terribly wrong until it was too late. But what's most disconcerting about Homan's digital disaster is the means in which the perpetrators gained access to his accounts and devices and what that says about certain customer service systems - most notably those of Apple and Amazon.

After conducting a bit of legwork, Homan discovered that the hackers had gained access to his AppleID. This is what allowed them to wipe all the data off his three Apple devices. Apparently all you need to access someone's AppleID is the email-address associated with it, a credit card number, the proper billing address, and the last four digits of a credit card on file. How did the hackers gain access to that information? It seems they did so by quickly and easily tricking Amazon into giving most of it to them.

The words "stunned" and "flabbergasted" probably best describe Homan's reaction to learning how the hackers successfully bypassed security policies set forth by two of the most recognizable brands in the technology game today. And while he blames himself for failing to take some simple precautions to protect his identity, he also recognizes his situation sheds light on some flaws in Apple and Amazon's popular cloud computing services.

Homan summed up his thoughts with the following statement [in a detailed piece he penned for Wired](#): [2]

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"I'm... upset that this ecosystem that I've placed so much of my trust in has let me down so thoroughly," he said

The cloud computing "ecosystem" did fail Mat Homan, and his plight should serve to remind individuals and companies that store sensitive data in "the cloud" that the technology (while oozing with upside and potential) remains very much a work in progress and can let its users down once in awhile. However, it should not serve as a convenient and ready-made indictment of any and all iterations of that technology.

Both providers and consumers of cloud-based services have more to learn about the technology, its potential applications, and the risks associated with it. Clearly no one has all the answers yet; not Homan, not Amazon, and not Apple.

Now please excuse me while I go change a few passwords...

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[1] http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/06/tech/mobile/icloud-security-hack/index.html?hpt=hp_t3

[2] <http://www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2012/08/apple-amazon-mat-honan-hacking/all/>