

# Cyber Whaling<sup>1</sup>

## What is “Cyber Whaling” and why must business executives, Board Directors, politicians, entrepreneurs and other leaders focus on their cybersecurity differently than on the cybersecurity of their broader organization?

Cyber Whaling is a specific form of phishing cyberattack that targets high-profile business executives, government leaders, political figures, and all other leaders with access to valuable data (“digital crown jewels”), reputations, and wealth that threat actors (aka “hackers”) are after.

Whereas in regular non-whaling phishing the email or site used in the attack looks pretty standard, in whaling, the emails or web pages serving the scam take on a more formal and legitimate look, and address the organizational VIP being attacked explicitly, making the scam look even more legitimate.

So why must business executives, Board Directors, politicians, entrepreneurs and other leaders focus on their cybersecurity differently than on the cybersecurity of their broader organization? Because:

1. The threat landscape facing you is much more serious than that facing your employees. Why is that the case? Because you’re the Cyber Whale hackers love to fish for. You have reputational & financial wealth you must protect, & you have access to your organization’s “Digital Crown Jewels” – be it critical data, IP, etc. This makes you a highly lucrative target.
2. You face more serious & sophisticated threat actors. Even if you’re small business owner, much less a prolific entrepreneur, politician or executive, you are a target of nation-state hackers entering the lucrative cybercrime market. Their motivation for targeting you? Anything from corporate espionage, data collection or manipulation, IP theft, to everything in between.
3. Your reputation and your organization’s reputation are intertwined. Destroying yours allows hackers to seriously hurt your organization or at least harm it. That is not as true for most other employees.
4. You’re cyber(in)secure by default. Cybersecurity is an arms race & right now threat actors are ahead of you. And because of the growing digitalization of your world, your threat surface is expanding.
5. You’re an even greater source of cyber(in)security than your employees: You travel globally, go to meetings outside your office & places where your own & the surroundings’ cybersecurity can be easily compromised. And you attend many more digital meetings over Zoom etc., at a time when hackers are hacking into even [court hearings](#) held via Zoom.
6. You are time-constrained and in your daily hustle, you: (1) Don’t pay close-enough attention to your cybersecurity, making yourself easier prey; (2) Often mistakenly believe that you’re not tech-savvy enough to look after your own cybersecurity, and...(3) Therefore relegate your cybersecurity protection to your providers, or at best your CTO. All three of these are a mistake, as explained [here](#), and so you become even easier prey for hackers.
7. And finally, because your organization doesn’t sufficiently cyber-protect you, as covered [here](#).

You are responsible for culture creation in your organization & family, & for leading both into the digital world cybersecurely. Your cybersecurity therefore bolsters or weakens both your organizational & family cybersecurity & well-being disproportionately to an average employee. Proceed accordingly.



**About the Author:** Mr. Cetnarski is a national & cyber security strategist, Founder & CEO of cyber defense ecosystem Cyber Nation Central® & Executive Producer of [VIP Cybersecurity Blueprint™](#). Formerly an investment banker with UBS technology & real estate groups & Chairman/CEO of a global tech & hospitality venture, he is an alumnus of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, The Wharton School, and the University of Chicago, and writes on integration of strategy, tech innovation, and policy in the areas of cybersecurity, national security, countering disinformation campaigns, and privacy.

<sup>1</sup> For last week’s introductory post, visit: [www.linkedin.com/posts/andrzejcetnarski\\_ceo-fraud-scam-activity-6735643267876098048-OCJl](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/andrzejcetnarski_ceo-fraud-scam-activity-6735643267876098048-OCJl)