

News sources lag behind in discovering and reporting online threats to consumers' identities, says president of IDTheftSecurity.com

(BOSTON, Mass., July 28, 2005 - IDTheftSecurity.com) Powerful Web-based people search engines are just now receiving official attention from the press. Yet these services, which offer Web users significant search capabilities for free or minimal fees, are well-established and nothing new. According to Robert Siciliano, a Boston, Mass.-based security expert, the media must dig deeper to help those whose main source to learn about threats is the news.

“Penetrating search engines that dredge up hard-to-find information on people have been around for a while,” said Robert Siciliano, a nationally televised and quoted authority on personal security and identity theft. “It is worrisome that supposedly savvy media such as the high technology press are just now reporting the phenomenon.”

Siciliano is author of "The Safety Minute: 01" and an upcoming book, "Identity Theft Pandemic: Curing the Identity Theft Virus." He appeared on CNBC's "The Closing Bell" shortly after data breaches at ChoicePoint Inc. highlighted the problem of identity theft earlier this year. *SearchSecurity.com* quoted Siciliano alongside renowned security technologist Bruce Schneier later this past spring, and CNN's "Wolf Blitzer Reports" aired a segment interviewing Siciliano.

On July 25, *PC World* ran an article by Andrew Brandt covering Zabasearch, one such search engine. According to the article, Zabasearch will sell detailed background information to any user for \$20. This is significant. Public documents containing the same data have been available for years but difficult to find. Zabasearch makes the search far easier and accessible to anyone online, not just credit collectors and others whose businesses may require the capability.

“It’s great to read warnings about Zabasearch in the news, but they come a year too late,” Siciliano said, “Zabasearch and its questionable services, all serious threats to consumers’ identities, have been online and available for quite some time.”

“Public records, which officials post online, are gold mines for thieves and available to anyone with a little know-how,” Siciliano continued. “I recently conducted a search of my own online and was easily able to find information on Jeb Bush and his wife, Colin Powell and his wife, and CIA Director Porter Goss and his wife—all legally. For this kind of data to be available at a few strokes of the keyboard and clicks of the mouse speaks volumes of the identity theft threat.”

“The problems that aid and abet identity thieves are found in the firmly established processes for storing public and private data,” Siciliano concluded. “Meaningful steps toward the eradication of identity theft will never be realized until we chip away at entrenched, longstanding practices that make identity theft one of the easiest crimes to commit.”

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Siciliano provides consumer education solutions to Fortune 500 companies and their clients. He has been featured on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, "ABC News with Sam Donaldson," "The Montel Williams Show," "Maury Povich," "Sally Jesse Raphael" and "The Howard Stern Show." Siciliano also leads personal safety and security seminars nationwide.

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