

SWFG: Have you Seen My Identity?

2/29/15

"I don't need to worry about identity theft because no one wants to be me."

-Jay London, Comic



Brian,

I'm in need of \$70,000 from my account sometime this week, please transfer this to my wells fargo account below :

Name : Lora Smith

Account Number : 22XXXX5451

Routing Number : 111XXX659

Let me know if you need anything else.

Thanks,

Sam

Other than changing a name and some numbers, what you read above is an actual email that I received from a client's gmail account. I was suspicious from the start and called the client to verify (we verbally verify every distribution). As I suspected, his email account had been hacked. The hacker was crafty enough time to find out who I was and send me the above message. If you find this scary, you should. The following are some thoughts from Warren and I on protecting yourself:

What is the Identity Theft issue?

- There were at least 12.7 Million victims in 2014, representing a victim every 2 seconds*
- \$21 Billion was lost to identity theft; approximately \$4,900 per household*
- 98% of stolen data is some type of card data*

*<http://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/identity-theft-and-cybercrime>

What are simple steps to prevent I.D. Theft?

- Shred, shred, shred. Consult [What to Keep, Where to Store, and When to Shred](#) to see how long you should keep statements and assorted documents
- Go to www.optoutprescreen.com/opt_form.cgi and fill out the form to reduce potential credit card offers sent to your home
- Computer – make sure to remove your hard drive before you properly dispose of an old computer. Destroy the hard drive before throwing out
- Home Wi-Fi – Use WPA-2 encryption instead of WEP
- Delete ANY remotely strange looking emails (yes, especially from friends).
- Don't post your birthday on any social media websites
- Password – Using your first, last, or pets' name as a password is NOT secure. Always use a combination of Uppercase and lowercase letters, characters (%,\$,#), and numerals. A couple years ago I elected two step verification on my personal email account after reading some scary articles on hacking. Anytime anyone tries to sign into my personal email from a different device than my own, I need to also input a code which has been texted to my cell phone.

- Take pictures of the contents of your wallet (both front and back sides of cards), print the pictures out, and keep a copy for safekeeping in your house. Use these copies in case you ever lose your wallet to cancel your cards ASAP.
- www.annualcreditreport.com – Order your 3 free credit reports online or via the mail and look for suspicious items. (<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/requestReport/requestForm.action>)
- I look at my reports every few years. Consider closing accounts that you don't use anymore.

What should you do if you think you might be a victim of identity theft?

- You should place an initial fraud alert on your file as soon as you suspect you might be a victim of identity theft. You can do this online at the three credit reporting companies:
 - Equifax - www.equifax.com/CreditReportAssistance
 - Experian - www.experian.com/fraud
 - TransUnion - www.transunion.com/fraud
- You can also put a “freeze” on your credit report so no one can view your credit report and obtain additional credit, loans or services in your name. This costs \$3 per credit reporting company and it costs \$3 to “thaw” the reports. The following links will help you freeze your credit:
 - **Equifax:**
 - https://www.freeze.equifax.com/Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp
 - **Experian:**
 - https://www.experian.com/freeze/center_rd.html
 - **TransUnion:**
 - <https://freeze.transunion.com/sf/securityFreeze/landingPage.jsp>
- Here are some other steps you can take:
 - Contact the security or fraud departments of each company where an account was opened or charged without your knowledge.
 - Follow up in writing, with copies of supporting documents.
 - Keep copies of documents and records of your conversations about the theft.
 - Use the ID Theft Affidavit at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/ or www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore to support your written statement.
 - Ask for verification that the disputed account has been dealt with and the fraudulent debts discharged.
- File a report with law enforcement officials to help you correct your credit report and deal with creditors who may want proof of the crime. Close the accounts that you know, or believe, have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

P.S. – Don't be like Jay London referenced at the top of my message. You should worry about identity theft.

Thank you for the trust and confidence you have placed in us and giving us the opportunity to provide education to you on your way to building your wealth.

As always, thank you for the introduction of your friends and family that so many of you have made. We are honored to serve you! As a service to our clients, we are happy to act as a sounding board for your friends and family. If any of them should need a second opinion on their financial situation, introduce them to www.striblingwhalen.com or call us at 678-989-0048.

Follow us on Twitter - [@brianedwhalen](https://twitter.com/brianedwhalen)

Regards,

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