



Last updated: Fri, 26 Feb 2010

General considerations

A completely secure system is a virtual impossibility, so an approach often used in the security profession is one of balancing risk and usability. If every variable submitted by a user required two forms of biometric validation (such as a retinal scan and a fingerprint), you would have an extremely high level of accountability. It would also take half an hour to fill out a fairly complex form, which would tend to encourage users to find ways of bypassing the security.

The best security is often unobtrusive enough to suit the requirements without the user being prevented from accomplishing their work, or over-burdening the code author with excessive complexity. Indeed, some security attacks are merely exploits of this kind of overly built security, which tends to erode over time.

A phrase worth remembering: A system is only as good as the weakest link in a chain. If all transactions are heavily logged based on time, location, transaction type, etc. but the user is only verified based on a single cookie, the validity of tying the users to the transaction log is severely weakened.

When testing, keep in mind that you will not be able to test all possibilities for even the simplest of pages. The input you may expect will be completely unrelated to the input given by a disgruntled employee, a cracker with months of time on their hands, or a housecat walking across the keyboard. This is why it's best to look at the code from a logical perspective, to discern where unexpected data can be introduced, and then follow how it is modified, reduced, or amplified.

The Internet is filled with people trying to make a name for themselves by breaking your code, crashing your site, posting inappropriate content, and otherwise making your day interesting. It doesn't matter if you have a small or large site, you are a target by simply being online, by having a server that can be connected to. Many cracking programs do not discern by size, they simply trawl massive IP blocks looking for victims. Try not to become one.

User Contributed Notes

General considerations

There are no user contributed notes for this page.

[Copyright © 2001-2009 The PHP Group](#)
All rights reserved.