INVESTIGATOR TIPS

What is the Cloud?

Are you using it? You might be surprised.

The "cloud"—as in cloud computing—is simply a metaphor for the internet used by network engineers to describe where computing resources are located when they are not local.

You likely use the cloud every day. Some common uses of cloud computing are social networking, web-based email, document/photo/video hosting services, and file backup services. So, if you use Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Gmail, Windows Live Mail, Google Docs, Apple's iCloud, Flicker, YouTube, Pinterest, or Dropbox, just to name a few (or 11), then you use services that utilize cloud computing.

Use of cloud computing gained attention in light of the highly publicized celebrity photo hacking scandal. It is unclear whether the actual vulnerability to the celebrities' online accounts stemmed from their computer device or at the point of cloud storage. Such vulnerabilities are not suffered by only the rich and famous.

Alan Brill, a Senior Managing Director with the Cyber Security practice of Kroll, addressed the event in interviews and Kroll's blog. Here are a few tips pulled from the *Kroll Call* blog post "Celebrities aren't the only ones using the cloud for sensitive data" (*http://blog.kroll.com/2014/celebrities-arent-the-only-ones-using-the-cloud-for-sensitive-data/*) in which he shared the following advice:

1. For all of your cloud storage services opt-in for multi-factor authentication. A two-step process to log in or authenticate your identity makes it more difficult for someone to hack into your account.

2. Update your password regularly--every 30 to 90 days. Make the new password long, not a word found in a dictionary , and use numbers, letters, and special characters if available. Brill suggests making the password 10 to 12 characters long.

3. Look through your cloud-based account and delete any documents or photos that you don't want compromised. Choose which documents you want to be accessible from different devices and store only those documents with your cloud storage service.

Questions about the security of cloud-based services may still exist but taking these basic steps can help prevent private files and potential personal information from being at risk for exposure.

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