



## Curiosity, Awareness and Engagement

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In the surreal 1980's movie, Brazil, a bug falls into a printer and an arrest warrant is wrongly issued for a man with the last name of Buttle, rather than Tuttle. Mr. Buttle is arrested and quickly dies of a heart attack.

Recently, after living in my home for 18 years, packages are being delivered across the street. Two weeks ago, and again yesterday, repairmen couldn't figure out which house was mine. Google sent them to the opposite side of the street, with an image of the neighbor's house. They both laughed after realizing they hadn't bothered looking for the house number on the odd side of the street rather than trusting the app that sent him to the even.

These might be entertaining and benign irritations, but reminders that our lives are becoming more complicated with technology.

Early in June there was an international data breach that affected many organizations and at last count affected 15.5 million individuals. On the West Coast, Oregon Department of Vehicles announced that 3.5 million records were hacked; California PERS was compromised; Umpqua Bank was compromised as were several California Universities.

The more we digitize, the greater our digital lives are vulnerable, and these headlines are reminders that we all need to be vigilant in protecting our identities and credit on-line.

In the US, three credit agencies have the greatest influence on the safety of your credit and identity:

**EXPERIAN:** Call 888-397-3742 or on-line: <https://www.experian.com/>

**EQUIFAX:** Call 800-349-9960, or on-line: <https://www.equifax.com/>

**TRANSUNION:** Call 888-909-8872, or on-line: <https://www.transunion.com/>

Closely monitor your credit report. At minimum, request a free copy, annually, from each of the above. Review the report in its entirety: address, accounts, employers, etc., and of course, correct all errors.

- **FREEZE YOUR CREDIT.** (When applying for new credit, like mortgages, you'll need to remember to temporarily lift the freeze during the process.)
- **REPORT FRAUD TO ONE OF THE ABOVE AGENCIES** if your identity may be compromised. (They are required to communicate to the other two). A fraud alert tells creditors to contact you prior to opening new accounts or before making changes to existing accounts.

*If you believe you have been a victim of fraud:*

1. Contact the financial institution immediately
2. File a police report
3. Notify the Federal Trade Commission: <https://www.identitytheft.gov/#/>
4. Social Security — Request to block electronic access. To learn more: <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10220.pdf>



*On-going best practices:*

1. Use complicated unique passwords and change them regularly
2. Simplify and reduce your digital foot as much as possible
3. Use tools such as two-factor authentication, voice or face identification
4. If the financial institution offers them, add alerts, such as texts if transactions exceed a certain threshold or if your credit card was used on-line or without a physical card presented

On a separate, yet somewhat related topic, the presidential election cycle is beginning. Part of why the US markets have been the preferred equity market around the world has been our democracy and the slow, relatively predictable, deliberative, legislative process. It was Russian hackers who initiated the breach of 15.5 million records. It was also Russians, who sowed ill-will during the last couple presidential elections by infiltrating news and social media feeds spreading misinformation and distrust. As with any new financially-related information or request, consider approaching your news and social media engagement with skepticism. Question the motives and all angles of the news being presented. If the information, financial or political, ignites emotions on the extremes: fear, greed, anger, pride, be curious about the alternatives.

Like the repairmen, we all have an opportunity to remain engaged and curious. By looking around and double checking when something doesn't seem right, we can protect ourselves and make sure we arrive at the correct destination.

**“DATA IS NOT INFORMATION, INFORMATION IS NOT KNOWLEDGE,  
KNOWLEDGE IS NOT UNDERSTANDING, UNDERSTANDING IS NOT WISDOM.”**

**— CLIFFORD STOLL**

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