

A Fool and His Data

April 2012



Do you remember the movie Spaceballs from the late 1980's? It was a satirical comedy that parodied many science fiction movies, especially the Star Wars series of films. For those of you who saw the movie, you probably remember the scene where King Roland of the planet Druidia is blackmailed into giving up the combination to his planet's air shield (which protects his planet's atmosphere from being stolen). Being forced to give up the information, he reluctantly confesses that the combination is 1-2-3-4-5. Upon hearing this, the villainous Dark Helmet (played by Rick Moranis) remarks:

"So the combination is 1-2-3-4-5? That's the stupidest combination I've ever heard in my life. That's the kinda thing an idiot would have on his luggage."

Would you like to guess what an idiot and his luggage has in common with 4.3% of iPhone owners? Yes, a recent survey of over 200,000 iPhones showed that the #1 passcode used by owners is 1-2-3-4. In fact, of the top 10 passcodes used, which accounted for 15% of all passcodes surveyed, eight of them were simple pattern based passcodes. That's slightly over a one in seven chance of unlocking an iPhone using one of the top 10 most popular passcodes.

So how about your phone, do you protect it with a passcode? Whether it's an iPhone, an Android based phone, or something else, every cell phone should be protected with a passcode.

How would you feel if someone went through your phone and accessed your personal information such as contacts, pictures, emails, and banking or social networking applications? Recently, the security company Symantec intentionally lost 50 smart phones in several major cities as an experiment to track the devices and their usage by the individuals who found them. Of the smartphones lost, 89% were accessed for personal related information and applications (such as banking and social networking). 83% of the individuals who found one of the lost smartphones attempted to access fictitious corporate information stored on the device. Disparagingly, only 50% of the people who found a device contacted the rightful owner in an attempt to return it. Similar experiments have shown that you have a better chance of having a lost wallet returned to you (cash intact), than the 50% who attempted to return the lost cell phones.

Whether it's accidentally lost, or stolen as part of the rising trend of smartphone robberies, setting a passcode on your device can provide a first line of defense for protecting your personal information. Remember, it's up to you to prevent data loss, so make sure you always use a sensible passcode on your mobile device.