Can QR codes be dangerous?

QR codes, or "Quick Response" codes were first created in Japan in 1994 and are widely used in business and Advertising. The pandemic made these touchless solutions even more popular.

For instance, you are at your favourite restaurant. Your waiter has requested you use your mobile phone to scan the QR code stuck to your table, where you can view the menu and potentially submit your order.

Safe right? Well not quite…

Anyone can make their own QR code - not just legitimate organisations. Unfortunately you cannot tell just looking at a QR code where it will take you. Attackers know this, and will create QR codes that will take you to malicious websites. These websites may mimic real websites so well that a user may not realise they have been tricked.

An attacker could stick a malicious QR code over the top of a legitimate QR code to trick a user into visiting a malicious website. QR codes have also been seen in phishing emails such as a fake MFA Enrolment emails.

Here are some tips to keep you safe…

- Only interact with QR codes from trustworthy organisations.

- Never scan a lone QR code you find in a random public place.

- Watch out for shortened URLs that appear when scanning a QR code

- Be cautious when completing payments or transactions via a QR code.

- Check that a legitimate QR code has not been hidden by a sticker with a malicious QR code, for instance at a restaurant.

- Never download QR code Reader Apps from unknown sources as they could contain malicious software. Most smartphones now have built-in QR reader capability with the OS.

- Use your "Report Phishing" button if you receive an email with a suspicious QR code.

- Try scanning the QR code at the top of this poster and see where it leads you, don't worry this one's safe to scan.

QR codes can be dangerous so be careful what you scan!

Do your part #BeCyberSmart

Search 'Cyber Security' in iGMS for more information.

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