

The Pros and Cons of Hiring Hackers

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Introduction

- My Perspective
 - Sociologist
 - Employer of Hackers
 - Experienced in Research, Operations, and Consulting
- What you'll get
 - Some sociology, some anecdotes, some technology

What's a Hacker?

- An Out-of-the-box thinker
- One who bends computers to his/her will
- A criminal?
- What's with the hats?
 - Black, White, Gray
- Terminology:
 - Cracker, Hacker, Script Kid, etc.

Why Would I Want One?

- You need experienced security professionals
- People who know how to defend networks, systems
- Innovation, forward thinking

What are they good for?

- Security Work
 - Consulting, Research
- System Administration
- Implementation Work

How do I find one?

- Depends what you're looking for
 - IRC
 - Mostly kids
 - Look around here
 - Mostly professionals
 - Various consulting houses
 - @stake, Rent-A-Hacker, etc.
 - Universities

Hackers are Individuals

- Quirks and Trends
 - Age (Youth is a myth)
 - Gender (Still largely male)
 - Race (Mostly white)
 - Class (Generally affluent)
- Setting expectations

Pros

- Bright, creative people
- Many not motivated by money
- Highly motivated to learn
- Very productive
- In touch with latest trends

Pros in Different Environs

- Research
 - Little supervision
- Operations
 - Snug as a bug in a rug
- Consulting
 - Scare your customers
 - Impress your customers

Cons

- May be hard to focus them on *your* goals
- The youngsters require supervision
- Some have poor communication skills
 - Oral, Written, Process
- That damn superior attitude

Cons

- Tend to see things in black & white
- May pursue dead-end directions too long
- Politics
- They can smell snake oil

Key Concerns

- Trustworthiness
 - More an issue with young ones (they have less to lose)
 - It is a valid concern

Key Concerns

- How do you decide on an individual basis?
 - Ask around/Reputation/References
 - Use IRC
 - Ask directly
 - Let them know your concern and work on it together
- Ultimately, you have to assess the risk

Key Concerns

- If there's a problem, how will you know?
 - Who watches the watchers?
 - If they are worth employing, you won't
 - Goes back to trust, you've got to have it.
- You are The Man™

Retention Issues

- Hot job market
- Big money
- Volatile stock market
- Free spirits

How to Fire Hackers

- Carefully
- With decency
- Communicate!

Conclusion

- Understand your problem
- Know what you're looking for
- Communicate!