

Houzz Suffers Major Data Breach

February 4, 2019 - Houzz, the up-scale online home improvement website, has announced they have suffered a major data breach. While the company did make the announcement, it is being a little vague about other information. Such as, who took the data, how the data may be being used and whether or not they know if the data is now for sale on the internet. So here's what we do know.

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(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
```

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(function() {  
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;  
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';  
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);  
})();
```

The company announced that a third party had gained access to a file containing both publically accessible user data as well as "private account information." No payment card information was lost during the breach, but the file did contain email addresses and encrypted passwords.

If the encryption key used on the password information was sophisticated, there is a possibility that the data thieves will never be able to break it. On the other hand, if it was simple they may have already broken it. Houzz isn't saying one way or the other, so at this point we have to assume that at some point the encryption key will be broken. And that's bad news for anyone using the same user name and passwords on other sites.

Houzz isn't saying how the data was stolen either. Maybe it was through hacking, or perhaps it was by an employee. Nor are they sharing how many people were affected so you have to figure that if you've registered an account with them, your data is floating around out there.

Because the information stolen doesn't have direct access to payment information, direct identity theft from this breach is unlikely. But indirect ID theft is possible, and perhaps even probable, for anyone who uses their Houzz logon information elsewhere. Hackers would have no problem taking your Houzz user name and password and using that in a computer program to try and break into other websites; a process known as credential stuffing.

Anyone who thinks they may have had their information included in this data breach should immediately change their Houzz password. And once you've done that, change your account information on any other website that used identical sign-on information as you Houzz account.

by Jim Malmberg

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