



Study: Mobile Phones Contain Treasure Trove Of Unprotected Data

Many users tempt thieves by storing sensitive personal, business information on portable devices

By Tim Wilson, [DarkReading](#)

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Mobile phone users are storing a dangerous amount of personal information on their cell phones and other portable devices, and they aren't doing nearly enough to protect that data, says a new study.

According to a survey of 600 commuters at London railway stations published today by Credant Technologies, 80 percent of phone users store information on their phones that could easily be used to steal their identities. For example, 16 percent have their bank account details saved on their mobile phones, 24 percent keep PIN numbers and passwords on their phones, and 10 percent store credit card data.

Virtually all mobile phone users (99 percent) use their devices for some sort of business task, even though 26 percent of those users have been instructed not to by their companies, the study says. Thirty-five percent of users send and receive business email with their mobile devices, while 77 percent store business names and contact information. Seventeen percent use their mobile devices to download corporate data, such as documents and spreadsheets, and 23 percent store customer information on their phones.

About 40 percent of these users do not password-protect this data, much less use any form of encryption. This could spell disaster for individuals -- and even the companies they work for, says Paul Huntington, public sector director at Credant.

"Once you have access to someones email, passwords, birthdays, business diary, documents, children's names, and pets, you can easily masquerade as that person. You could send out email under their names, read all their corporate data, and get to see every personal detail of their lives," Huntington observes. "People are ignorant as to how easily a professional thief could take over their lives and effectively destroy them. It is imperative that all mobile phone users, even with the most basic handset, password-protect and encrypt them."

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