

All.Net Analyst Report and Newsletter

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RSA and Influence Operations

I was looking through the booths at RSA trying to find all the companies and technologies to counter the widespread disinformation campaigns, influence operations, and other internal and external threats exploiting AI, social media, and other mass communications.

I didn't find much

To me, this seems like one of the biggest areas we need to address as a field. And I believe this to the point where I have put actual time, effort, and in some cases, even money behind that belief. But it's not just some notional belief of course. It's based on a combination of fact and analysis. I won't even try to share it all with you here, because that's not really the point of the article. But to give you a sense of it:

- Much of the cyber extortion we see today is caused by tricking people into doing the wrong things.
- Brand destruction and manipulation of markets is driven by this.
- The US elections coming up this fall are being flooded with generated and altered voice and video.
- The conflict in the Middle East involves global influence operations sponsored by nation states to influence the body politic of Western civilization.

And so forth...

So why is it not a big deal at a huge cybersecurity event?

I think the market is "too early" because it is not yet considered to be "too late".

- Too early means that buyers are not yet spending money on it.
- Too late means that buyers only tend to spend money after they are hit.

It's the same old same old for cybersecurity. By the time the people with the money figure it out, it will take a few years to get it underway, and it was already a few years before they got there.

The bleeding edge

Much of my career has been spent at the bleeding edge. And I think that's where we are today with respect to countering malicious influence operations. RSA is one of the key marketplace indicators. By the time it is big there, the early stage is over. And clearly, the early stage in this field is just emerging today. A few spots are successful to a limited extent, like sending exploits into employees by the company to 'test' security as 'training'. These have big problems like driving a wedge between the company and its workers. But we'll see..

Conclusions

Influence operations are of course underway big time at the RSA. It's called marketing and sales. But countering malicious influence operations is at the bleeding edge, just emerging.