Privacy and Security

The added convenience made possible by the Internet also makes it harder and harder for us to maintain anonymity. When you purchase something online, you're buying habits can be logged, and you may be targeted with marketing, even when you want to do something simple, like book a dinner reservation, your name, phone number, email, and maybe even a credit card number are required. Now think about the information you post publicly; name, pictures, family, friends, and even your location may be available to anyone online. Be aware of what you're sharing by reviewing the privacy policy of the service before you use it. It's up to you to decide if the trade-offs of a service are worth sharing your personal information. In most cases, companies are trying to build great products that make our lives easier. They may offer their products for free because you provide them with free data. Just make sure your information won't fall into the wrong hands. Privacy doesn't just affect us on a personal scale. It's also become a concern for governments. In Europe, data regulation and privacy are strictly protected to help EU citizens gain more control over their personal information. COPPA, or the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, also regulates the information we show to children under the age of 13. There are many more examples of government regulation of privacy. It's no longer something we can think of on an individual scale. Another concern that's grown with the rise of the Internet is the issue of copyright. Imagine you create a beautiful graphic and upload it on the web for your friends to see, then some random stranger takes your graphic, claims that as their own, and sells it for profit. Thankfully, several companies have been founded and designed specifically to help solve this issue of copyright and intellectual property theft. There are also efforts in place that you've learned about, like open source projects that benefit from being on the Internet. In these cases, open collaboration allows a project to thrive. On top of privacy and copyright considerations, computer security is another issue that you may face in both your personal and professional life. More and more companies are being targeted in cybersecurity attacks. For example, the WannaCry attack that started in Europe, infected hundreds of thousands of computers across the world. The financial loss of that attack has been estimated at over a billion dollars. Hospital computers were even infected. In a critical life threatening moment, every second matters. Not being able to perform basic medical duties, like pulling medical records took time away from doctors and nurses, and more importantly, the lives of their patients. Before the WannaCry attack, there were lots of other worldwide attacks. In 2011, the Sony PlayStation network was attacked and around 77 million user accounts had personal information exposed. Everything from entire governments to businesses that handle the data of millions of people have been compromised. Computer security is no longer the job of specialized security engineers. It's everyone's responsibility. As an IT support specialist, you'll need to have a fundamental understanding of computer security. I spend every day working in security. I love working in the field because I get to help protect people and their devices from all over the globe.