NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

Intelligence Bulletin

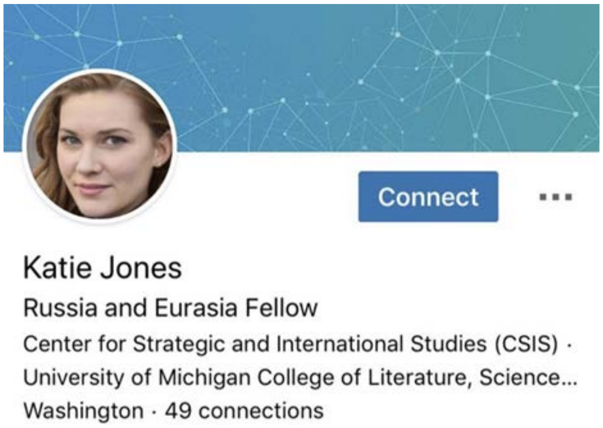
July 23, 2019

Product No. 2019-07-025
NTIC SIN No. 2.7 | HSEC No. 7

Beware of Espionage Efforts on Professional Networking Sites

Individuals using professional networking sites—particularly LinkedIn—should be aware of foreign governments attempts to connect online to gain access to classified or sensitive US Government information or proprietary intellectual property and technology. Indicators of state-sponsored fake accounts include fake profile photos, limited connections, and generic job titles. In 2018, the head of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center disclosed a Chinese espionage campaign that entailed an effort to recruit individuals with access to government and commercial secrets via LinkedIn. France and Germany have warned about similar foreign espionage efforts on LinkedIn.

- In June, the Associated Press revealed that the LinkedIn account of Katie Jones was fake and likely used a computer-generated profile picture. The profile featured a job at a prominent DC-based think tank and an expansive network of experts. These credentials enabled the imaginary Jones to make connections to a deputy assistant secretary of state, a senior aide to a US Senator, and an economist considered for a seat on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Experts who reviewed the profile noted that flaws in the profile, such as experiences and degrees that could not be verified, mirrored other state-run espionage efforts on the networking site. Authorities have not disclosed which state was behind the profile.



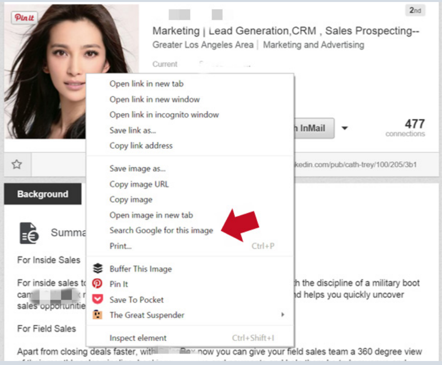
Katie Jones
Russia and Eurasia Fellow
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) ·
University of Michigan College of Literature, Science...
Washington · 49 connections

Fake LinkedIn Profile of Katie Jones (Source: The Verge)

- In June 2018, Kevin Mallory, an ex-CIA officer, was convicted of espionage for transmitting classified information to China. Mallory was contacted on LinkedIn in February 2017 by an individual claiming to represent a Chinese think tank but who the FBI says was a Chinese intelligence officer. Mallory traveled to China, delivering documents containing secret and top-secret US defense information to the Chinese contact in exchange for money.

- In 2017, a GE Aviation engineer received a message on LinkedIn from an individual claiming to be the deputy director of the International Cooperation and Exchange Office at the Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics in China. After an email exchange, the US-based engineer agreed to share information on GE Aviation’s proprietary technology. An FBI investigation determined the same individual, who was subsequently arrested and extradited to the United States on espionage charges, conducted multiple probes on LinkedIn designed to collect information on technologies.

Protect Yourself Against Espionage Efforts on Professional Networking Sites



[redacted]

Marketing | Lead Generation,CRM , Sales Prospecting--

Greater Los Angeles Area | Marketing and Advertising

Current [redacted]

477 connections

kedin.com/pub/cath-trey/100/205/3b1

Background

Summa

For Inside Sales

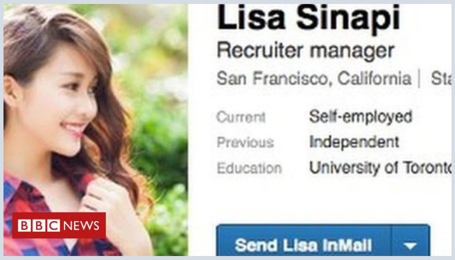
For inside sales t [redacted] the discipline of a military boot ca [redacted] d helps you quickly uncover sales opportunitie

For Field Sales

Apart from closing deals faster, with [redacted] now you can give your field sales team a 360 degree view

Source: Ignite Social Media

Fake profiles may use stock photos or model-quality photos of a lesser known actor/actress or public-figure as profile pictures. ***Do a reverse image search to determine if the same image has been used previously online.*** Using Google Chrome, right-click and select "search Google for image." For other web browsers, upload or paste the image using Google's image search and selecting the camera icon.



Lisa Sinapi

Recruiter manager

San Francisco, California | Sta

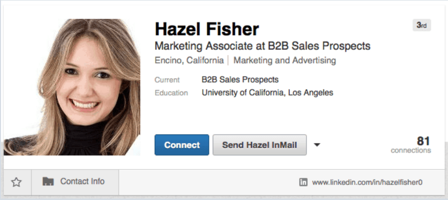
Current Self-employed

Previous Independent

Education University of Toronto

Source: BBC News

A fake profile may lack specificity in the summary and experience sections or use a generic job title such as "manager" or "recruiter." ***Spend a moment reviewing the profile before clicking accept.***



Hazel Fisher

Marketing Associate at B2B Sales Prospects

Encino, California | Marketing and Advertising

Current B2B Sales Prospects

Education University of California, Los Angeles

81 connections

Contact Info

www.linkedin.com/in/hazelfisher0

Source: LinkedInsights

Fake profiles may have a limited number of connections or connections that are all the same or all the opposite gender. ***Check mutual connections to assist with confirming the validity of a profile.***

Additional Safety Practices

- ***Never*** accept connection requests from individuals you do not know without reviewing their profile first.

- ***Do not*** provide personal information such as your Social Security Number in an online job application sent to you via a direct message.

- ***Refrain*** from sharing specific information about your position or company over messaging.

Visit LinkedIn to report fake profiles on their site.