One of Avalon's clients hired a third-party web developer to design their website. As part of the design, the third party implemented a website feature that would allow individuals to submit job applications online. However, the applications, unknown to the client and the web developer, were not secured properly and were inadvertently made publicly available.

Avalon discovered that hundreds of applications and social security numbers were were made publically available.

The Challenge

An applicant performed a Google search of their name and found their job application, social security number, date of birth, and address on the client's website; this was due to Google crawling the website, which creates an index of the contents of each webpage it is able to access so that it can be found when someone searches for words or phrases.

The Strategy

Avalon performed an investigation to determine the magnitude of the situation. Avalon conducted interviews with the client's employees, reviewed electronically stored information from the webserver, and gathered additional evidence.

The Results

Avalon discovered that hundreds of applications and social security numbers were crawled by the Google search engine and were made publically available. Although a specific leak date was not identified, it was estimated that it likely occurred several years prior to the applicant finding their application on Google.

Avalon determined that the leak was caused by use of improper website permissions that allowed any visitor the ability to access a portion of the website that processed and displayed the application. That portion of the website should have only been accessible to the client's staff, but due to the

security flaw, Google was able to access the application processing area, index it, and make it available to the public.

The findings of the investigations were used by both the client and third-party consultant to strengthen their website's security posture.

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