

Table of Contents

The Art of Deception 1

The Art of Deception

By Ian Morrison

[IMAGE] In *The Art of War* Sun Tzu explains that ‘all warfare is based on deception’. He states that psychological tactics minimise the need for military involvement, and it seems that hacker Kevin Mitnick agrees with him.

In his *The Art of Deception*, Mitnick draws upon his experience as a hacker and social engineer. The term ‘social engineering’ is widely used within the computer security community to describe the techniques employed to persuade people to part with information, or carry out actions on the attacker’s behalf. As they focus their attention on information security, corporations deploy firewalls and other security measures to keep hackers out. Mitnick argues that while they’re busy configuring these high tech solutions, little or no attention is paid to the weakest link of corporate security – the users.

Telling stories from the point of view of the victim and the attacker, Mitnick then analyses the con and explains the subtleties that made it work. While there’s a lot of repetition in the book, and wading through somewhat contrived case studies is often hard work, the insights gained are unlike anything you’re likely to find elsewhere.

Mitnick was arrested in 1995, and having being held without bail for almost five years, he served eight months in solitary confinement. He pleaded guilty in March 2000 to wire fraud, computer fraud and intercepting communications, and was subsequently released. However, he was barred from profiting from telling his story until 2010, meaning the book isn’t as autobiographical as it could or should be. If the studies in his book were based on his real exploits, I’m certain it would be not only more authentic, but also entertaining too.

The Art of Deception is a disappointing if fascinating read. Seemingly aimed at corporate middle management, the end of the book is weary and offers little advice beyond a ‘Trust noone’ mantra. However, the insights from earlier chapters are fascinating, and that alone makes it worth blagging a copy for review.

Kevin D. Mitnick and William L. Simon // *The Art of Deception* // 352 pages hardback // ISBN 0-471-23712-4 // £19.95