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## [Kevin Mitnick Metamorphosis](#)

*Once hunted by the FBI, now a respectable security consultant*

Not such a long time ago (but with the technological progress we are experiencing, it seems like it all happened ages ago) the world was freaked out by a type of outlaws that were taking criminal activity to the next level. It was not the case of a crime syndicate formed of influential dons or crime leaders. The world had to deal with the so-called "cyber-punks" or "cybervillains" that could take control over a companies' networks by simply combining social engineering and technology. The most prominent figure of the '90s reflecting the case was definitely Kevin Mitnick. He was sought by the authorities for quite a long time and many times he successfully eluded them. After his apprehension in 1995 he spent four and a half years in jail and in 2000 he got out. Mitnick came from a working-class background and started his hacker "career" with phreaking, a subculture of people experimenting and exploring telephone systems. This happened back in the '80s when digitalization had not occurred and the control of the telephone companies was not assisted by computers. Heavy phone phreaking would be present in Mitnick's life starting at the age of 16. He declared in a Playboy interview that he loved the illusion of calling a number, entering a five-digit secret code and then call anywhere in the world for free. The pranks began to pour down the phone cable. Some of the greatest were turning a regular home phone into a pay-phone (a recorded voice would tell to deposit a dime in order to dial a number) or taking over directory assistance in Rhode Island and the answering operator would say "That number is 555, 2 one-half 37". His first "encounter" with the authorities took place at the age of 17 when FBI came knocking at his door. Some time later, he got locked for the first time in California Youth Authority. During his incarcerations he once got 8 months of solitary because the judge was convinced that he could start a nuclear war given the access to a phone. However, one of his greatest pulls was getting the source code for Motorola's finest device, Motorola MicroTAC Ultralite. Using social engineering and hacking technology he managed to bypass four levels of security. And Mitnick did that while he was on the run from the FBI and employed at a law firm under the alias name of Eric Weiss very similar to Harry Houdini's given name, Ehrich Weiss. After all the hiding under aliases and continued hacking, Kevin Mitnick was apprehended and according to the US Department of Justice, he admitted stealing software from Motorola, Novell, Fujitsu, Sun Microsystems and Nokia. And Mitnick turns hacking legit. After the years spent in jail, Kevin Mitnick started to make some order into his life. Based on his reputation as the most dangerous hacker on Earth, Mitnick began writing books inspired by his hacking experience. Art of Deception is his first book focusing on social engineering, a technique that helped him trick system administrators into giving away information to unauthorized persons. The information gained this way included usernames and passwords provided by the very employees of the company that was being hacked. His next book, The Art of Intrusion, contains details on real-life computer break-ins and the methods used by the perpetrators to cover their tracks. Also, the counter measures are offered so that the attacked company can prevent the hacking aftermath. Nowadays, Mitnick is the co-founder of Defensive Thinking and spends a lot of time traveling all around the world "preaching" on system security to different governments and companies, providing information on rejecting social engineering and speaking about the vulnerabilities a system could have. He successfully turned his life around and plays nice. He now even cooperates with authorities and appears before different committees (like the House of Financial Services Committee in 2003), talking about the techniques used for carding (stealing credit card information, phishing sites, spoofing etc.). His experience as a hacker turned out to be an advantage after his release from prison and he can now fully benefit from that. The notoriety gained during his runaway from the FBI and other authorities helped him a lot in creating a security consulting firm called Mitnick Security Consulting Ltd. The company is not only focusing on providing technology to protect the network, but also on-site consulting and training products and seminars showing examples of how information loss can be prevented. His success is also attributed to the media of the time, which distorted the facts and gave him the credit for some of the most important hacks of the '90s. His reputation grew over the years and now, companies can learn from his experience.