

A person wearing a dark hoodie is centered in the background, their face obscured by shadows. The background is a dark blue/black gradient with a pattern of glowing binary code (0s and 1s) in a lighter blue color. The text is overlaid on this background.

# YOUR OLD COMPUTER: ***THE EASIEST SOURCE FOR IDENTITY THEFT***

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BY **ARMAN SADEGHI**

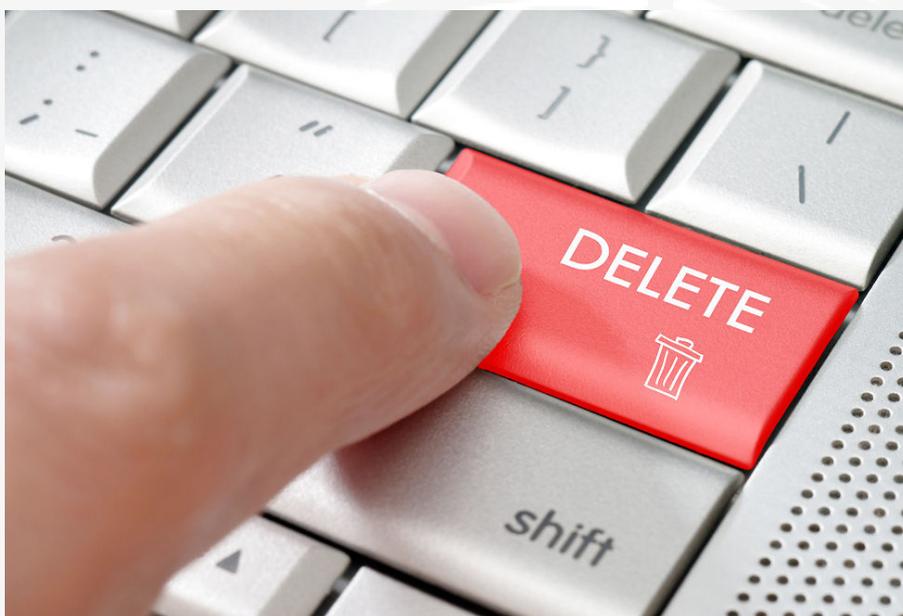
FOUNDER AND CEO

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Computers and laptops are becoming obsolete faster than ever before. As we move more of our personal data onto computers, criminals are using the content left over on our old computers to steal our identities. There are five common misconceptions about the data stored on your old computer.

# #01

## **I DELETED MY FILES, SO THEY ARE NO LONGER ACCESSIBLE.**



This is the most common misconception about computers, hard drives, and the way data is stored. When you delete a file from your computer, while you can no longer see it in Windows or on your desktop, the data remains stored on your hard drive. It stays there until your computer needs to use that specific part of the hard drive for storing new content, which often takes years or even a lifetime. This is something you can easily test by saving a large file, such as a video, and then deleting it. You will notice that saving the file will take five to ten times longer than deleting it. That is because during the saving process, your computer actually stores all of the data. However, during the deletion process, your computer does not remove all of the data from your hard drive, thereby leaving 99% of that file remaining on your hard drive.

# #02

## ***I FORMATTED MY DRIVE SO A CRIMINAL CANNOT GET TO THE DATA.***



While many people make the mistake of thinking that formatting a hard drive or wiping it completely clean eradicates the data, this is simply not true. The reason is that your operating system is much more interested in getting the job done fast and allowing you to get back to work, than ensuring 100% eradication of data. As hard drives have increased storage capacity into the range of 1TB and above, eradicating the data completely from a hard drive takes a minimum of several hours. Therefore, operating systems such as Windows, Mac OS, and Android are not designed to delete all of the data when you format a drive.

# #03

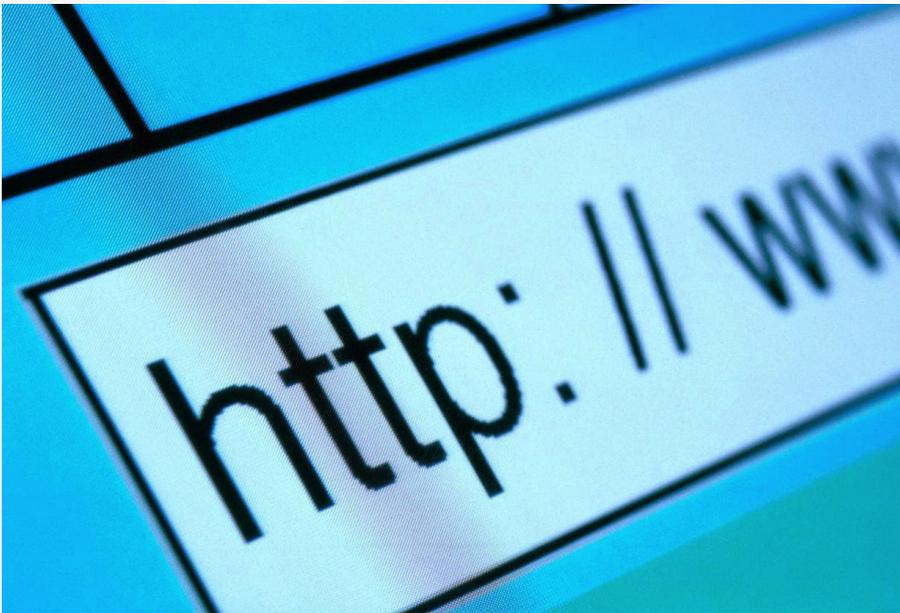
## **MY COMPUTER IS NOT FUNCTIONAL, SO THERE IS NO DATA THAT A CRIMINAL COULD GET.**



You may assume that just because your computer no longer turns on and functions properly, the data you used to have stored on that computer is completely gone. However, the data stored on a hard drive is not the same as the operating system of the computer. Since most computer-related issues pertain to hardware other than your hard drive or the operating system, even if you cannot turn on your computer or start the operating system, a criminal can easily access the data you stored on that hard drive. Throwing away an old laptop or computer that no longer works without complete eradication of the data is one of the easiest ways of handing a criminal your personal data and allowing them to steal your identity.

# #04

## ***I DON'T STORE ANYTHING CONFIDENTIAL ON MY COMPUTER, SO THERE IS NO DATA RISK.***



In the 1980s and 1990s, most of the personal data stored on your computer was data that you personally typed into the keyboard. Today however, that is not the case. Most of the personal data stored on your computer is stored passively and without your knowledge by web browsers, cloud providers, and other programs running on your system. Your browser is consistently storing “cookies” on your computer and other files containing much of the personal data you are accessing online. Therefore, when you access a bank account or an email address from your computer, even if you are not storing files onto your computer, your browser is automatically storing much of that data on your hard drive without your knowledge.

# #05

## **I'M RECYCLING MY COMPUTER, SO I KNOW MY HARD DRIVE WILL BE DESTROYED.**



A very common misconception is for people to think that the process of “recycling” is the same as the process of “destruction.” This is simply not true. The Environmental Protection Agency promotes a program of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, which means that an electronics recycler should make every attempt to put your old electronic devices back into reuse, instead of tearing them apart for the commodity values.

## CONCLUSION



Therefore, in order to ensure complete eradication of your data, it is critical that you work with an e-Stewards certified e-waste recycling company and ask that they provide you with a certification confirming complete eradication on the data on your hard drive. This certificate should include the serial number of your computer, laptop, or mobile device, the serial number for your hard drive, and the exact time and method used to eradicate your data. The most certain method for data eradication and destruction is physical shredding. However, a multi-pass wipe completed by a certified firm can be almost as secure and is acceptable if confirmed by a certification document.

When it comes to the data on your electronic devices, it is a big mistake to try to cut corners, time, or costs. Make sure you protect your identity, personal information, and all of the content on your device by using only e-Stewards certified firms and always insisting on a certificate of data destruction. Anything less will put you and your personal data at risk.

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Arman Sadeghi is an entrepreneur, motivational speaker and peak performance coach. His passion is to educate and to help individuals and companies reach their full potential. He currently spends half of his time pursuing his passion of changing people's lives and helping companies reach their full potential and the other half of his time growing the various businesses he has developed in the last 7 years. He currently owns 6 companies in a variety of industries including 3 in IT Asset management, IT Refurbishment and Electronics Recycling sectors. Arman Sadeghi's largest company is All Green Electronics Recycling, which he founded in 2008 after watching a "60 Minutes" expose on the global electronics waste challenge and data security threats. Arman earned his Bachelor's Degree in Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of California at Berkeley and attended Harvard Medical School. All Green was recently named the 366th fastest growing private company in the United States by Inc. Magazine. Arman Sadeghi's broad knowledge of business, technology, human behavior and personal development has allowed him to coach some of the most successful executives in the world to reach even higher levels of success while also ensuring that they thrive in all areas of life.

