



Lessons to be learned about security measures based on Wacoal's real experience – Too late for regrets after “something” happens



Mr. Koichi Yabushita, Assistant Manager, Promotion of Information Security, Corporate Planning Department, Wacoal Holdings Corp., (right) and Ms. Yuri Kamo, Retail Information System Section, Information System Department, Wacoal Holdings Corp. (left)

If asked, “Are your EC site’s security measures fully prepared?” can you immediately say, “No problem at all” ? If you hesitate to answer even for a moment, you may need to review your security measures. Wacoal, the long-established underwear maker, adopted the Web-tampering detection solution, GRED WebCheck (hereinafter, GRED) as one of their security measures. GRED enables automatic patrolling of the site, sending out email alerts if any tampering is detected, and identifying the source code, etc. This service SecureBrain provided has been adopted by over 5,000 companies, including CyberAgent and JCB. Needless to say, the optimum situation is never to have a cyberattack or unauthorized access that would be detected by GRED. However, unless one responds quickly in the event of a cyberattack on an EC site, or acts appropriately when a Website is tampered with, any delay in such response can be severely detrimental to any EC vendor that depends on that EC site. “Security” is the quintessential “safety measure” that is not directly related to conversions or sales. We interviewed Mr. Yabushita and Ms. Kamo about security measures that EC vendors really should consider.

Consider Wacoal as a textbook example of protective “security measures”

- First, could you please tell us about your own business responsibilities?

Yabushita: I promote security across the entire group, which is comprised of about 20 companies, including Wacoal, Peach John, and Ai that runs San-ai Resort, as the person responsible for promoting information security in the Corporate Planning Department of Wacoal Holdings Corp.

Kamo: I work for the Retail Information System Section under the Information Systems Department at Wacoal Holdings Corp. I mainly handle system operations for the B-to-C channel. My department monitors systems related to customer purchases, such as via stores, websites and catalog mail orders.

-Please could you describe Wacoal’s EC site?

Kamo: Wacoal established the predecessor of this EC site as the Wacoal Web Store in 2000. The EC site is defined as a core channel in the corporate mid-term management plan, and we aim to proactively reinforce its functionality to enhance our customers’ convenience. Furthermore, we also promote the realization of an Omni-channel service to make the most of our synergy with physical stores. The benefits offered by Wacoal include the option for a trial fitting before purchase in a department store, and receiving advice from professional sales clerks in the store. On the other hand, many of those who are more familiar with EC prefer the hassle-free nature of making their purchases online. We have further improved the convenience of such online sites and reinforced our services to meet those customers’ needs.

All websites were taken offline for a month due to Web tampering. “A quicker response would have been possible if GRED had been adopted.”

-I understand that the Web tampering detection solution “GRED” has now been adopted for Wacoal’s EC site. Please can you explain how and why it was adopted.

Yabushita: Wacoal had a data leakage incident due to unauthorized access about ten years ago. We were proud that we took that opportunity to implement all possible security measures as a company. However, we discovered that part of our site was tampered with due to unauthorized access by a third party in 2014. We had to take our corporate EC site, Wacoal’s group company sites, and brand sites, etc. offline for a month. We became keenly aware that our past efforts had been insufficient, and had to review our security measures from scratch. We began by initiating discussions on solutions, as a mechanism to detect Web tampering had to be found quickly, and then discovered GRED.



Kamo: Because of this experience, we became more focused on security measures as a company. Even now, four years later, our focus on security is undiminished.

- *So, of all the solutions available, why did you select GRED?*

Yabushita: Immediately after the incident, we wanted to scrub the source code to confirm that nothing unnecessary was included in the source code of the revised site. Then, before adopting GRED, we requested, "First, please recheck that all the source code for all Wacoal Holdings sites is clean," and after one or two months, all the sources were confirmed via GRED. The way this was handled at the time was impressive, and the realization that the service could be used quickly by simply registering site URLs, which is attractive, led to our decision to adopt GRED. At first, we selected the cloud-based version out of the two types of GRED products, the other being an on-site version. If we had had to prepare a server, then operation and maintenance requirements would arise, so the cloud-based version that could easily be started was very advantageous for us.

Kamo: The cost was lower than that we expected, which was another factor in the decision.

- *What is it like now that it is actually adopted?*

Kamo: GRED automatically patrols the sites every day, and also automatically conducts a number of scanning checks if set in advance. In addition, reports are periodically created, so it is hassle-free, and very helpful. Perhaps the only thing we do have to do manually is checking the detection results, which confirms whether the detected details are problematic or not.

- *Has anything changed since GRED was adopted?*

Kamo: As expected, the site is more secure. Looking back, I think that the incident in 2014 could have been handled much more quickly if GRED had been adopted. If there were any suspicious activity on the site, we would receive an email alert from GRED by the following day, which would have enabled us to respond sooner. We really appreciate the sense of security that comes with knowing that "there shouldn't be any problem because GRED can reliably detect anything that happens" because GRED is adopted.

"Security measures that are often considered a low priority" should be taken immediately if not already well prepared.

- *Security measures are not directly linked to EC sales and results, so may end up as an after-thought. Please tell us why EC vendors should implement security measures, such as web tampering detection solutions, and advise companies who are considering adopting such services.*

Yabushita: I think that very few people will have a strong sense of ownership, like we do, because the incident we experienced is not so common. However, if asked, "Are the site, server, and vulnerabilities and the version of the EC package being used, perfectly managed?" – if you cannot claim to be well prepared for any one of them, it would be better to take appropriate measures, such as adopting solutions as far as possible. On the one hand, although some issues can be improved, without taking perfect measures, your sites may still be stopped, but by adopting sufficient solutions at an earlier stage, you can minimize the problem by reacting quickly if something happens. I think the difference between these two approaches can be massive.

- *How would you both like to tackle security measures from now?*



Yabushita: In 2018, Wacoal established Wacoal-SIRT (Wacoal Security Incident Response Team) and joined the Nippon CSIRT Association to better respond to security threats in unison by effectively and quickly reacting to each security incident. We would like closer connections with other member companies, and to consider what type of products or services are needed to construct more reliable security systems. Also, I personally would like to increase the number of personnel involved in security within the company. We would like to bolster security knowledge together with the Retail Information System Section that Kamo works for, and strive to establish a stronger organization in terms of security.

Kamo: Isn't operation of sites without having to worry about time spent improving security one of the ideal styles for EC vendors? I would like to take advantage of GRED so that we can use security measures as much as possible and focus on communication with customers.