

ANONYMOUS

Anonymous

Michelle Charters, Christopher Scarfogliero, Austin Wentz, Anthony Visintin

Saint Leo University

## Abstract

Anonymous is a hacktivist group focused on attacking governments, institutions, and the Church of Scientology. Since it is anonymous, anyone in the world can join by hacking, announcing that it was Anonymous, and wearing the Guy Fawkes mask. Some people use Anonymous as a prank and form of entertainment, while other use it to express problems they have with government and institutions. Although it is not centrally organized, Anonymous has made a huge impact over the years and many believe they started a movement.

## Anonymous

“We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us.”

Anonymous is a group of ‘hacktivists’ that originated in 2003. Anonymous members, known as Anons, are recognized for their DDOS cyber attacks as well as their attacks against governments, institutions, and the Church of Scientology. Anonymous members either cover their faces or wear the Guy Fawkes mask from the movie *V for Vendetta*. This means that anyone can be an Anon and people have taken part in the group, attacking institutions, all over the world.

Originally, Anonymous was a series of pranks and served as entertainment, but it soon became an activist group with a strong political stance. Anonymous has hacked government agencies, churches, large corporations, and more. Dozens of people all over the world have been caught and arrested for being in Anonymous. There is argument whether Anonymous is a movement or a brand, but either way it has caused a lot of waves. In 2012, *Time* magazine ranked Anonymous as one of their “100 most influential people.” The only rules include not attacking the media, not discussing the group itself, and remaining anonymous (Sands, 2016).

### Why They Became Hacktivists

Carole Cadwalladr, writer in *The Observer*, said, “If you believe in Anonymous, and call yourself Anonymous, you are Anonymous.” Since anyone can join, there have been many different agendas when it comes to joining the hacking group. Some people believe it should be for pranking and entertainment, like it was when it started in 2003. However, for the most part, the group has been used to fight Internet censorship and government institutions. The Church of Scientology, many different governments around the world, and large corporations have all been victims of the attacks. They have leaked private information, crashed web servers, protested, and spread the movement around the world. Anonymous believes in freedom of speech and does not

want to be controlled by their governments or large corporations (Sands 2016). There is no specific goal, but the central theme has led to many huge incidents that have made the group Anonymous famous and influential, all over the world.

### Operation Ferguson

Mike Brown an unarmed African American teenager was shot and killed in Ferguson Missouri by a police officer. Anonymous did not like this in the least bit. Immediately a video was posted by Anonymous stating that they would take revenge if any of the protesters were harmed by police officers. Anonymous believes that this is yet another example of police brutality having a deadly effect. On August 12 a large amount of personal information was broadcasted on the internet about Jon Belmar. Jon Belmar was the St. Louis County Police Chief. Anonymous stated that the reasons that Jon Belmar's information was put on the internet was because he challenged Anonymous on TV calling their threats "hollow" and because Belmar would not release the name of the person who shot Mike Brown.

### No Cussing Club

McKay Hatch, a teen living in South Pasadena, California, was targeted by Anonymous in January of 2009. Hatch runs the "No Cussing Club", a website that is against any and all forms of cussing. Anonymous released McKay's phone number, home address, and a lot of personal information on the Internet. Because of this McKay has been receiving very rude phone calls, pornography deliveries, large amounts of hate mail, and pizza they did not order. Though Anonymous never fully stated it, I believe that the reason McKay Hatch was targeted was because of his want to censor. In a way, the child's club was about taking liberties away from the people in this country. Anonymous believes heavily in freedom of speech, and will do what it takes to keep it free.

## Cybergate

Cybergate is a hack lead by the hacktivist group Anonymous. This was a retaliation hack for something that the CEO of HBGary Federal said. Aaron Barr who is the CEO claimed that his cyber security team was able to infiltrate Anonymous, and he threatened to leak the names of many members of the group. This turned out not to be the best move for this company. As a result of this claim the group hacked into their website along with Barr's twitter account. Anonymous didn't do anything to disruptive, but they did enough to prove a point and get this company to back off. They first hacked in and changed HBGary's logo to the Anonymous logo, and continued to take down their phone system. They then went further and extracted 70,000 emails that contained plans to attack wiki leaks, and plans to go after political campaigns. Anonymous posted the link to all of this through Aaron Barr's twitter account.

## Dark Discovery

Another hack for this group was the dark discovery back in 2011 where Anonymous was able to gain access to hidden wiki which is a gateway into the underground dark web. With this hack, they hunted down child pornography websites and shut them down. On top of this they also hacked into file-sharing websites used by pedophiles and leaked the names of over 1,589 members. This was such a notorious hack because Anonymous was able to accomplish what authorities were trying to do for years.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Anonymous is a hacktivist group focused on attacking governments, institutions, and the Church of Scientology. Some people use Anonymous as a prank and form of entertainment, while other use it to express problems they have with government and institutions.

Since anyone can join, there have been many different agendas when it comes to joining the hacking group. There is no specific goal, but the central theme has led to many huge incidents that have made the group Anonymous famous and influential, all over the world. A couple of events Anonymous members took upon themselves to get involved in was the Mike Brown shooting where members intentionally leaked personal information about St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar and releasing personal information about McKay Hatch who in the eyes of Anonymous was trying to censor free speech and Anonymous believes heavily in freedom of speech, and will do what it takes to keep it free. "We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us."

## References

Sands, G. (2016, March 19). What to Know About the Worldwide Hacker Group 'Anonymous'. Retrieved April 15, 2018, from <http://abcnews.go.com/US/worldwide-hacker-group-anonymous/story?id=37761302>