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Making use of the concept of ‘bug bounty’, Rahul M, an engineering student, has helped companies like Facebook, Amazon, Apple to sort out their security issues

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Being able to create a group chat on Facebook with Mark Zuckerberg and his employees as its members — is some achievement right? This computer science engineering student from Chennai accomplished this with ease! Meet Rahul M from Sri Sakthi Engineering College, who has not only been researching about web security, but has also effectively found bugs in products of companies like Facebook, Google, Amazon and others.

In a conversation with DC, the youngster explains the concept of bug bounty, his career as a product developer and also shares tips to keep our personal security intact online.

“I found my passion in hacking and product building only through Mark Zuckerberg, my inspiration!” says Rahul, as he proceeds to explain what bug bounty really is.

“It is a program which is conducted by companies, in which people are allowed to test a product for security issues. So, if you find an issue, you can report that to the company and get rewarded. It is also very essential because it’s a good technique to improve the security of a product,” he explains.

Recalling the time when he found a bug on Facebook, Rahul claims it was an unforgettable experience — “I started my bug hunt with Facebook in the year 2013, but my first report got rejected. My first valid bug was in Facebook’s group message — it had an issue, that enabled one to chat with members of a group in which the person is not even a member! Initially, this bug was also rejected; but when I was able to create a group chat in which Mark and his employees were present, my life changed!”

After this, he went on to find security issues in Google, Flickr, HackerRank, United Airlines, Amazon, Apple, eBay, MediaFire and more. “Each effort has been a worthwhile experience. In Google Translate, I found a bug through which I was able to steal cookies of other websites — and in Apple, I found a bug in Safari, through which one can make a user visit malicious sites. So far, I have earned a total of more than $4000 in cash as bug bounties, apart from receiving 50k miles reward for an issue I detected in United Airlines,” he beams.

Gaining confidence from this efforts, Rahul also developed multiple products.

“I dedicate an important part of my life to build products — so far, my notable ones are Buzzringer, Tagsdock, an iOS app, and Jongler, a game which is available on iOS. These products have been doing well with constantly increasing user base,” he claims.

Rahul wishes to be an entrepreneur someday. “My dream is to build a product which people around the world will be able to use — what else can be a greater feeling?” he smiles.

On a concluding note, he passes on a few tips for people to protect their online security: “Just make sure you don’t use the same password for all websites, and always look at the site url before entering any confidential data, because most of the big hacks starts with phishing through fake pages,” he says, signing off.