

Dark Net Markets Going Out of Business: Where are Users Headed to Next?

 ke-la.com/dark-net-markets-going-out-of-business-where-are-users-headed-to-next/

February 16, 2021

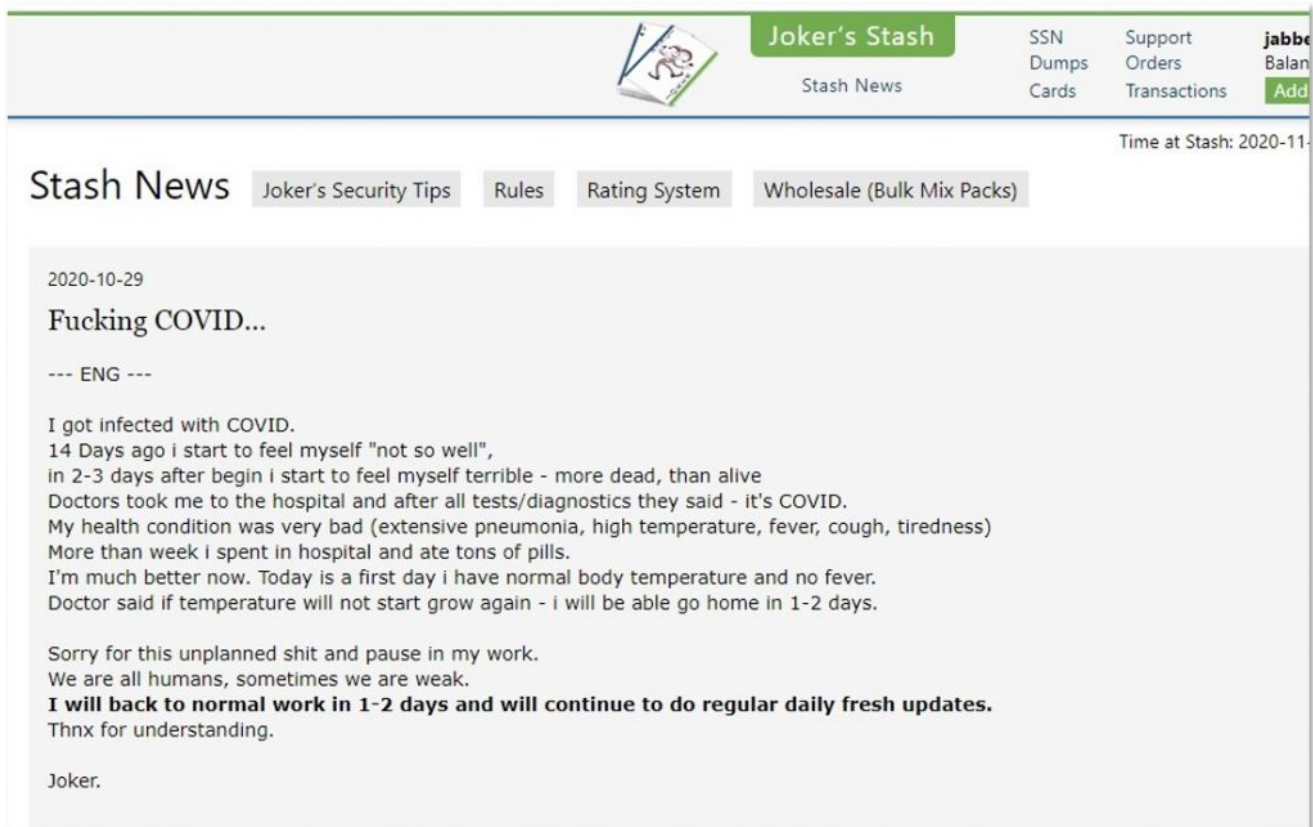
Going out of business is a popular phenomenon with online marketplaces both in the Dark Net and surface web. Dark Net marketplaces continually shut down for a number of reasons, causing those markets' users to actively search for alternative spots to trade goods and services. In light of the major announcement of Joker's Stash shutting down on February 15th, 2021, we've dived into the cybercrime underground to understand more about the closures of Dark Net marketplaces and where market's users migrate to.

The research's main highlights include:

- KELA identified four main marketplaces that are trying to steal Joker's Stash's users following the market's closure. According to advertisements and users' reactions, we may see users shifting activities to **Brian's Club, Vclub, Yale Lodge, and UniCC**.
- KELA observes cybercriminals acting just as regular businessmen and marketers, trying to **take advantage of their competitors' terminations in order to advertise their services and steal their competitors' users**.
- KELA reveals an **evident trend of market administrators offering free vendor bonds** to try and lure new sellers to come to their marketplaces following a competitor's market closure.
- KELA highlights the **significance of monitoring threat actors and their TTPs so that enterprise defenders can assess actors' credibilities, predict actors' next steps, and protect their organizations from cyber threats**.

The Hunt for New Markets to Trade Compromised Credit Cards

Recent cybercrime events have shown that Covid-19 has taken a toll even on Dark Net cybercriminals. Towards the end of 2020, **Joker's Stash – the largest Dark Net credit card marketplace – embarked on its termination**. Following a year where the market's admin caught the Coronavirus and some of the market's servers were seized by authorities, it's only natural that the admin may have realized that it may be time to retire. Like millions of individuals around the world, the pandemic put a pause to the admin's day-to-day activities, causing him to announce his unavailability for some time while he took some personal leave to recover.




The screenshot shows the Joker's Stash website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the site logo, 'Joker's Stash', and links for 'Stash News', 'SSN Dumps Cards', 'Support Orders Transactions', and a user profile for 'jabbo'. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'Joker's Security Tips', 'Rules', 'Rating System', and 'Wholesale (Bulk Mix Packs)'. The main content area displays a post dated '2020-10-29' with the title 'Fucking COVID...'. The post text reads: '--- ENG --- I got infected with COVID. 14 Days ago i start to feel myself "not so well", in 2-3 days after begin i start to feel myself terrible - more dead, than alive Doctors took me to the hospital and after all tests/diagnostics they said - it's COVID. My health condition was very bad (extensive pneumonia, high temperature, fever, cough, tiredness) More than week i spent in hospital and ate tons of pills. I'm much better now. Today is a first day i have normal body temperature and no fever. Doctor said if temperature will not start grow again - i will be able go home in 1-2 days. Sorry for this unplanned shit and pause in my work. We are all humans, sometimes we are weak. **I will back to normal work in 1-2 days and will continue to do regular daily fresh updates.** Thnx for understanding. Joker.'


Announcement by the Joker's Stash admin, where he shares that he was infected with COVID-19, forcing him to pause work on the marketplace in order to focus on his recovery. In hindsight, this announcement seems to be the beginning to the end of Joker's Stash.

Joker's Stash has become a bustling one-stop-shop for cybercriminals looking to trade compromised credit cards. Cybercriminals, thirsty for money, turn right to this infamous market for all of their credit card trading needs. That is, until February 15th, 2021. A month prior, the market's administrator announced that they will officially be closing in 30 days, without much explanation as to why.

JokerStash -
Vendor of:
Dumps
CVV Seller



Join Date: Mar 2017
Posts: 6,414
Reputation: 105 [H.]
Balance: 0.00\$



---- ENG ----

Joker goes on a well-deserved retirement. Joker's Stash is closing. When we opened years ago, nobody knew us. Today we are one of the largest cards/dumps marketplace. Unfortunately, or fortunately - nothing lasts forever. It's time for us to leave forever. We will leave the Stash opened for 30 more days, until 2021-02-15, so all Stash users can spend accounts balances. On 2021-02-15 we will wipe all our servers and backups and Joker will fade to dark, forever. And mark my word: WE WILL NEVER EVER OPEN AGAIN! Do NOT trust possible future imposters! After 2021-02-15 there will be no more Joker and no more Joker's Stash. Dear partners of Stash - you can be sure, that before we leave forever, you will get all payouts, contact me you know how.

We are also want to wish all young and mature ones cyber-gangsters not to lose themselves in the pursuit of easy money. Remember, that even all the money in the world will never make you happy and that all the most truly valuable things in this life are free.

---- RUS ----

The official announcement posted by Joker's Stash announcing the closure of the market by February 15, 2021.

By reviewing some recent events related to this market, we assume that the closing is likely a combination of several things:

1. Simply, the admin has decided to retire after some good years of business – and what a better time than after he fell sick to COVID-19 and may not be ready to go back to work at full force.

2. The market's operations could have been affected when the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and Interpol have temporarily seized a small number of servers used by Joker's Stash. The hunt and growing dangers by authorities may have influenced the decision by the market's admin to close.
3. The downtime due to the admin's sickness could have slowed operations and affected him from picking activities back up.
4. Joker's Stash may have experienced potential reputational damage from multiple downtimes that occurred on the market, including the recent seizures of several of their servers by authorities.

Regardless of the reasons behind the closure, the market's regular users have raised concerns of where to go next. Naturally, other credit card marketplaces leveraged this opportunity to push their businesses forward and lure the Joker's Stash users towards them. This behavior is not novel though. We've seen similar activities by marketplace admins in the past when markets like Dark Market and Empire have shut down.

We've explored some popular underground forums to see where Joker's Stash's sellers and buyers may be headed to next. Throughout the analysis, we've observed that though the carding landscape is very active among cybercriminals, it seems that several marketplaces may be seeing more traffic due to Joker's Stash's closure.

With the heavy marketing and advertising that Brian's Club has been investing in, it seems that the longtime attempts of marketing to credit card traders may be finally paying off now that Joker's Stash is out of the picture. Brian's Club has been immodestly trying to steal the thunder by publishing an advertisement on the main page of XSS, soon after the announcement by Joker's Stash.



Brian's Club purchased advertising space on the main page of XSS, a well-known underground forum where Joker's Stash members have discussed where they will move to next.

Clearly, cybercriminals have learned how to best use marketing tactics at a time of opportunity. Not only did Brian's Club publish ads on the main pages of XSS, but they also put down some money to become the official sponsor of Omerta – a popular underground forum focusing on credit card trading – a position that was held by Joker's Stash only a year ago.



Brian's Club has decided to become the official sponsor of the Omerta carding forum.


And as Brian's Club's marketers are doing their jobs, the underground actors seem to agree that **this marketplace will be the new hub for trading compromised credit cards, especially since it appears to be the largest market for compromised credit cards** in terms of volume of cards and dumps offered for sale. To date, we've found that **there are nearly 5 millions of credit card details available for sale on Brian's Club**. Buyers should deposit at least 1 USD to activate their account. Moreover, the shop has a referral system: "For each invited user you will get percentage of his deposit" – meaning users will get 10-15% from the first deposit of the person they invited to Brian's Club.

A screenshot of a forum post from a premium user on XSS. The user's profile picture is a cartoon character with black hair and a pink jacket. The post is dated Jan 15, 2021. The text of the post is in Russian: "Кому-то нужно будет заполнить опустевшее место. Brian's Club, ваш выход!" and "Стрела, посланная тобой в другого, облетит земной шар и вонзится тебе в спину". The user's profile information shows they joined on Nov 1, 2018, have 112 messages, and a reaction score of 75. There is a 'Report' button below the post.

Forum members on XSS are sharing that Brian's Club will be the next go-to for trading compromised credit cards: "Someone will need to fill the empty space. Brian's Club, it's your turn!"

But Brian's Club has not been the only carding marketplace to try and take advantage of the Joker's Stash closure. Vclub, another carding marketplace, has also been seen trying to push their name in the carding world by advertising their market for users looking for Joker's Stash replacements. Registration fee is 25 USD with which they instantly gain access to about 100,000 compromised credit cards and hundreds of thousands of dumps.

vclub
megabyte



Seller
+7
69 posts
Joined
03/12/20 (ID: 101394)
Activity
другое / other

Posted January 17

On 1/16/2021 at 6:10 PM, blacklotus71 said:

good day !
give pliz a link to the joker stash working or to another good shop!
thanks !

In PM I can advise one good shop.

+ Quote

A post by the official user for Vclub on a well-known underground forum, where they attempt to promote themselves to Joker's Stash's users.

Members on a popular underground forum have claimed that Vclub does not reach the levels of service and quality that was available in Joker's Stash. For example, a member complains that despite the fact that he purchased one of the priciest cards for sale on the forum, the card's spend limit was 150 USD. Buyers complained that the quality of cards sold on Vclub aren't as good as they are on Joker's Stash, however others still think that Vclub is one of the good possible alternatives to Joker's Stash.

Yesterday, 18:38 #2088

Senior Member

Originally Posted by [redacted]

Listen, in comparison with joker's stash you don't have the level, then your cards are approved but low balance it does not pass a payment of more than 150 \$ even those which are at the highest price, for information I only buy the cards EU (FR) I suspect you moreover of reselling your base to several sellers, because the card is live on luxchecker, 1 hour later it indicates declined (fraud suspected) OK! so I confirm VCLUB = BULLSHITTTTTT !!!!!

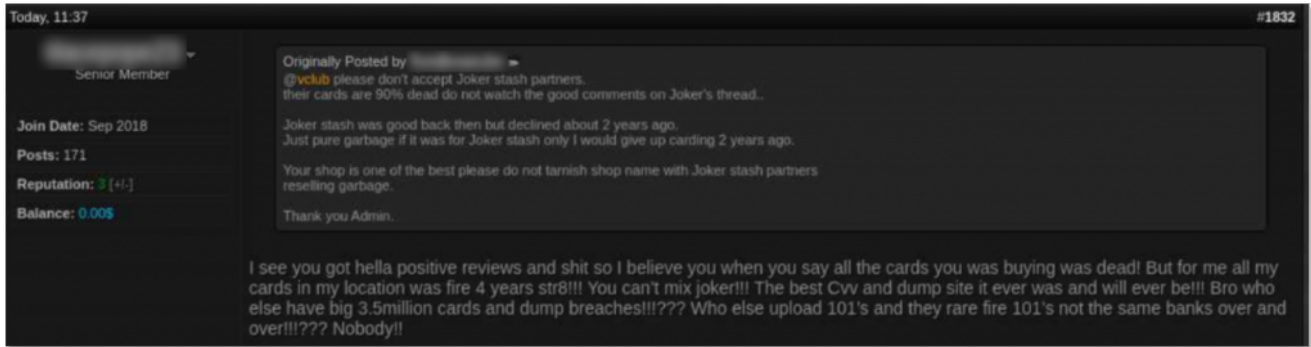
and when it gives result fraud suspected means shop is reselling? first learn more than talk.

VCLUB - The shop you won't regret using

Join Date: Jun 2019
Location: St. Petersburg, Russia
Posts: 517
Reputation: 35 [+/-]
Balance: 20.00\$

QUOTE QUICK REPLY

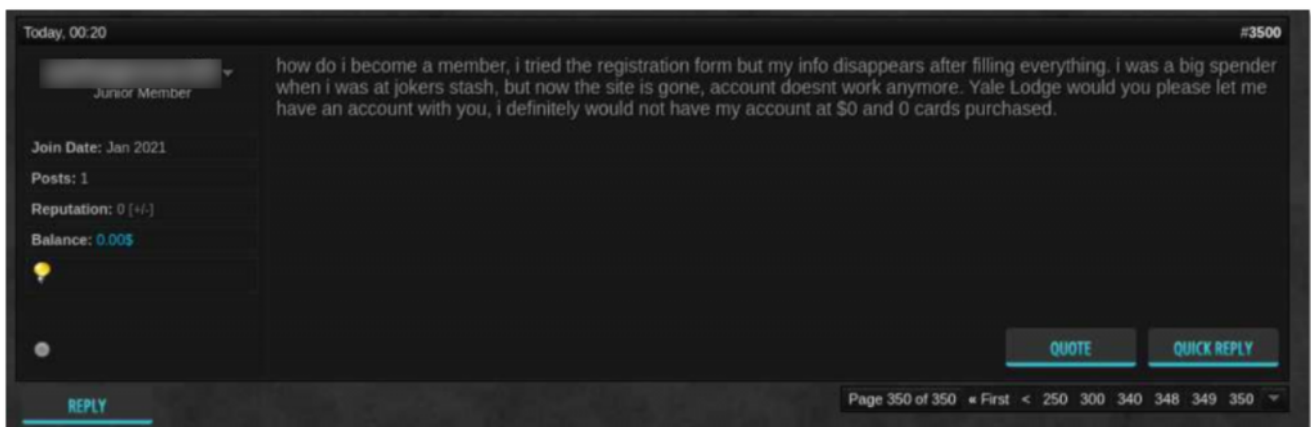
Users complaining about the quality of Vclub's cards.



Users clashing in the thread of Vclub if Joker's Stash vendors should be allowed to trade there or not.

Additionally, we **may see some of Joker's Stash's users migrating to Yale Lodge**. Some former Joker's Stash users have been seen actively inquiring on how to register on Yale Lodge, as they look for new marketplaces to profit from. However, one red flag for Yale Lodge here is the registration fee that they demand – 150 USD for registration and a minimum deposit of 200 USD – a demand that is significantly higher than other similar shops such as Joker's Stash that required a 20 USD deposit.

Last, UniCC also seems to be a promising candidate to replace Joker's Stash with almost 300,000 new credit card details being added every week (based on their updates from February 3-9, 2021). At UniCC, users are able to explore these details with a 100 USD deposit requirement in order to activate the account.



Overall, the carding landscape is much bigger than the several markets we mentioned in this post. Moreover, **cybercriminals buy cards and dumps not only in specialized shops but also on forums, via instant messaging channels, and behind closed doors in private**

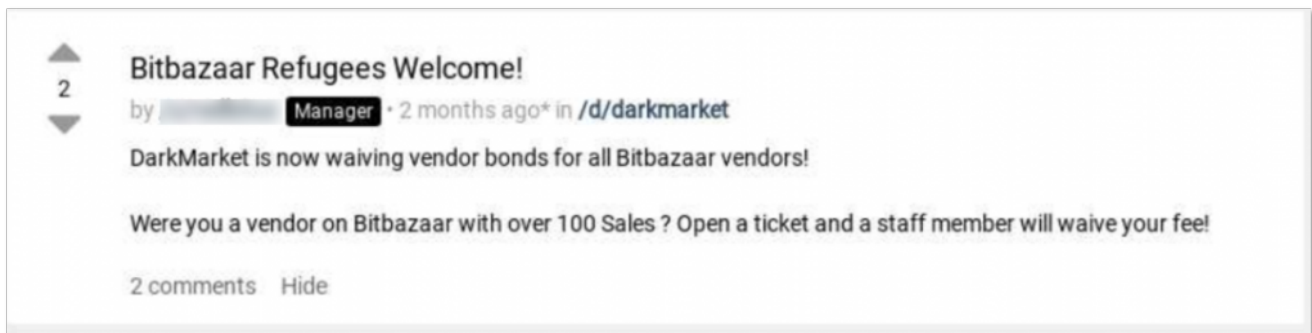
deals. To reach true success in the carding niche, newly emerging markets need to focus on the constant influx of vendors and buyers – something that the above-mentioned markets have been actively attempting to do with their heavy advertising campaigns.

The History of Market Closures and User Migration

This isn't the first time a major underground marketplace is closing. In the past we've seen similar instances where markets or forums shut down, forcing its users to find replacements.

Dark Market

Dark Market took great advantage of its predecessors by using tactics of “free offerings” for users coming from similar and recently shut down markets. Dark Market, reportedly the world's largest Dark Net marketplace, grasped attention of many cybercriminals when they used the closure of Bitbazaar and Nightmare Market to attract more users to their market. Dark Market's administrators published advertisements offering waived vendor bonds for refugees of Bitbazaar and Nightmare Market, meaning that new vendors coming from those formerly closed sites could open a free vendor account on Dark Market by simply applying and passing the market's requirements.



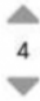
▲
2
▼

Bitbazaar Refugees Welcome!
by Manager · 2 months ago* in </d/darkmarket>

DarkMarket is now waiving vendor bonds for all Bitbazaar vendors!

Were you a vendor on Bitbazaar with over 100 Sales ? Open a ticket and a staff member will waive your fee!

2 comments [Hide](#)



FREE Bond Waiver ~ Nightmare Refugees ~

by /u/darkmarket **Admin** · 1 year ago in /d/darkmarket

If you are a vendor on Nightmare Market. Don't despair, DarkMarket is happy to give you a FREE vendor account. No silly time limits, we are happy to accept any and all Vendors.

If you have a good account history, we will actually assess this and give any vendor who meets our requirements, FE privileges.

We want your business and our team will do everything we can to ensure it is a happy, long lasting and profitable experience.

Best of luck and stay safe!

15 comments Hide

But soon after Dark Market's shutdown by law enforcement in January 2021, we found other markets using the same tactic of free vendor bonds being used against them. Dark0de 2.0, which is said to be online from May 2020 (allegedly being a reborn of the infamous market, Dark0de), now offers "Free (Premium) Vendor Bonds for Dark Market Refugees," which is valued at 200 USD for new entry level vendors. Other markets adopted this 'free vendor bond' tactic en masse: Raw Market, ViceCity, Liberty, Televend – to name just a few.



Dark0de Market - Free (Premium) Vendor Bonds for Darkmarket Refugees

by /u/Dark0deReborn **Dark0de** · 4 days ago* in /d/Dark0deReborn

In this post:

- Free Vendor Bonds
- Free Premium Buyer Bonds
- New FE Vendor Bond

Here we are, January 12 2021, going into a new year with renewed hope and light at the end of the tunnel. But for many vendors the situation may be different with the ending of Dark Market.

This is why we have decided to keep entry to starting business on Dark0de 100% free. This means all vendors bonds and all premium buyer bonds will be free for the time being. We know it has been a difficult time for many both emotionally and financially and we want to give people the opportunity to expand their business and their financial situation.

We currently already have 800+ vendors and closing in on 90.000 users. This is a great base for any vendor to step in and take advantage of the current/fast growth of Dark0de and simply make some money again. Because 2021 is supposed to be the year of hope and change we do not believe in asking people to pay in order to start business on Dark0de Market.

Basically what it comes down to is this:

- Free Basic, Gold or Diamond vendorship based on previous vendor experience.
- Free Premium buyer bonds until the end of January
- Vendor who are just starting out: Please contact us directly to see what we can offer you

(A Premium buyer can create Specific Product Request Listings on Dark0de)

Just create an account on Dark0de and send us a message on Dread or Open a support ticket to claim your Vendor Bond Waiver or Premium Buyer Bond Waiver.

1. How do I become a seller on Dark0de?

If you have a buyer account and want to start selling products on Dark0de, please make sure we list the products you want to sell. We have rules about what you can and what you can't sell on the Dark0de market, be sure to check out the rules above.

Once you are clear about our rules and you want to proceed, you can upgrade your account to Seller (Vendor) - Level 1 here. There are three levels to upgrade (Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3) as a seller but you have to start at Level 1. Each level offers a wider variety of products and services that you can offer to our buyers.

The vendor bond to become a Level 1 vendor is \$200 USD.

In some cases the vendor bond can be waived for established vendors, please contact Dark0de's support to ask for the possibilities. Be ready to prove work done on other platforms. Do not contact support for the vendor bond waiver if you can't offer us solid proof of work done.

Yellow Brick Market

Yellow Brick Market, another Dark Net market known for going on and offline multiple times without any explanation whatsoever, seems to have officially gone offline once again in the end of 2020. To no surprise, here as well alternative markets have been using this event to promote their markets. Dark0de 2.0 took the spotlight again here, offering again free vendor bonds and some further benefits as well.

Incognito Market was seen using the closure of both Yellow Brick Market and Dark Market to advertise to established vendors on both of those now-closed markets. Incognito's administrators shared that they will offer any established vendors who have good track records on pre-existing markets – such as Dark Market or Yellow Brick Market – to have their bond fully waived and, depending on their reputation, may be automatically gifted full “finalize early” (FE) privileges, allowing them to bypass the escrow holding period during a purchase. The admins also shared that established vendors who don't have the longevity to be eligible for the automatic full FE privileges but still have a good reputation can also pay for the €1500 FE Bond.

▲ 2
▼

Incognito Market welcomes refugees from the defunct markets, and we promise to do our very best to serve you! 🇩🇪
by [Administrator](#) · 2 weeks ago* in /d/IncognitoMarket

WE WANT *YOU* FOR INCOGNITO MARKET

With the recent disappearance of **Yellow Brick Market** and the seizure of **Dark Market**, **Incognito** is currently opening up the subread and the market to new faces!

Signing Up as a Buyer:

Simply sign up and start buying from your favourite vendors! Our FAQ covers everything you should need to know, and any other questions can be asked here on the subread or in our modmail and PMs.

Signing Up as a Vendor:

To register as a vendor account, first create and sign into a regular buyer account, and submit an application. **NOTE: Be sure to include a PGP-signed message in your application**, as signified in one of the stickied posts at the top of this subread! It makes our jobs much easier and guarantees we'll be able to get you up and running on the market much sooner.

Established vendors who have good track records on pre-existing markets will have their bond **fully waived** and, depending on rep, may be automatically gifted **full FE privileges**. **Established vendors who don't have the longevity to be eligible for the automatic full FE privileges** but still have a good reputation can also pay for the **€1500 FE Bond**. This is given out on a case-by-case basis, and if you are denied an **FE Bond** opportunity, no amount of money will change our mind.

New vendors must pay a bond of **€300**, payable in **Bitcoin** or **Monero**.

Empire Market

Similar trends were also observed when the famous Empire Market left the underground ecosystem in an [apparent exit scam](#). Icarus Market took on from other famous market admins and also decided to use this opportunity to invite any former Empire vendors to become vendors on their market by offering them free vendor bonds as well.

Following the Cybercriminals' Tracks

The examples listed above are just a few of the many instances where cybercriminals are observed acting just as regular marketers looking to improve their profits and market traffic. What is evident is that these markets' admins show a trend of offering free vendor bonds to try and lure new sellers to come to their marketplaces following their competitor's closure.

Cybercriminals will constantly be shifting operations to new markets and innovating their monetization methods in line with Dark Net changes. It's therefore crucial that enterprise defenders constantly follow these trends to ensure that they understand threat actors and their TTPs, allowing them to continually be a few steps ahead of cybercriminals. Now that Joker's Stash has officially been closed, we can presume that most activity will turn to Brian's Club, Vclub, Yale Lodge, and UniCC. By observing chatter between cybercriminals across these markets and other forums and instant messaging groups, fraud teams can learn tremendously about what cybercriminals may be planning to do next, essentially helping them avoid severe financial losses due to fraudulent activities.