THE ROLE OF A CISO

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CISO?

The role, CISO or Chief Information Security Officer, can be traced back to 1994 when Steve Katz at Citigroup was anointed to head up a specialized cybersecurity office after a series of attacks from, wait for it, Russia. Over 27 years have passed and according to Cybersecurity Ventures "100 percent of large corporations (Fortune 500, Global 2000) globally will have a CISO or equivalent position by the end of 2021, although many of them will be unfilled due to a lack of experienced candidates."

But what makes a person a good CISO candidate? The new breed of CISO is being asked to do a lot more than ever before. Historically, the CISO has been considered a function of IT, reporting to the CIO (Chief Information Officer). But for the past 10 or so years, things have been changing as the term "cyber risk" has reached boardroom discussions. Gone are the days you can just show a slide with all the spam emails you blocked this year as an example of the effectiveness of your cybersecurity program. A CISO needs to speak the language of the business, explaining cybersecurity effectiveness in terms of tool efficacy or third-party and supply chain visibility and risk. In addition, CISO needs to understand the impact of varying cybersecurity and privacy laws on their cybersecurity programs. However, the dirty little secret and most important skill any CISO can have is the ability to collaborate (and work well) with others! Everything the CISO organization does impacts the business and having the communication skills to explain why this answer is "yes" and this answer is "yes, but…" (notice I didn't say 'no') is what business leaders want.

All of this begs the question of whether these large corporations are looking for the "right" candidate for their business or just an "experienced" one.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

> DREAMS UNFULFILLED. WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK?

Dear MiC Community,

I recently celebrated a birthday and have been in a very reflective place, which is not really news I suppose, I seem to stay in a permanent state of reflection. However, the question that consumed me this past month was what have I not done in my career that I still would like to accomplish?

So as I often do I am going to share a piece of my story, in hopes that it will inspire others. When I started my corporate journey back in 2012 it was my five-year goal to be a Chief Information Security Officer by 2017. I am a goal-oriented person, I don't make resolutions, I set out specific, targeted, and achievable goals for myself, and then I execute. CISO in five years sounded like a good goal to me, let's go get it!

By my assessment, the first step in becoming a CISO was to become an effective leader by defining my leadership style and learning how to motivate others. The people part of this journey was the most enlightening! You really have to be a part-time psychologist to understanding different personalities and how to effectively communicate, motivate and lead.

Defining the leadership traits that you value will also allow you to set the foundation for what is and is not acceptable from direct reports, peers, bosses, but most importantly yourself. We will get back to that.

The next step was to develop a broad range of skills and subject matter expertise in the cybersecurity (and privacy) field. To date, I have led and managed teams responsible for privacy, third-party risk management, cyber-incident management, incident response, cyber-network defense, forensics, e-discovery, internal threat, database security management, information security, and privacy awareness, and data leak prevention. Check.

The last step was motivation, and it is here where the challenges came in. By the time 2015 rolled around, I began to seriously question whether I wanted a CISO role anymore, not because the desire was gone but because of the behavior of others that held those positions. I allowed individuals, in leadership positions, that did not exude the leadership traits I valued, impact my goal and I stepped away. Of course, I told myself that this was not something I wanted anymore, that my goal was unattainable because it would cost me too much of myself. But like most dreams that are left unfulfilled, the desire never went away, and I was lying to myself to think I could ever stop pursuing my CISO goal. The best part about changing my mind and getting back on track is that I know so much more now, about myself and my goal, than I did in 2012. I will keep you guys posted on the progress.

Thought for the month: What have you allowed others to take away from your journey and how are you going take your dream back?