The Uncommon Sense of Information Technology Strategy

4 Powerful Steps to Take When You Don't Know What's Next
Responding to the Growing Threats of Social Engineering: Is Your Organization Cyber-Mindful?

By: Thomas Skill, Associate Provost & CIO, University of Dayton

Let’s face it, cybersecurity isn’t going to get any easier in 2018. As long as there is a financial or geo-political incentive, the threats will keep coming and the level of exploit sophistication will keep rising. Winning this battle truly requires a change in our approach. If you have been scanning the popular media or reading our professional publications, you’ll notice that the attack vectors are shifting from technical exploits to human vulnerabilities. Like most businesses, even the bad guys are striving to be more efficient and it is very cost-effective to socially-engineer a way into your system rather than deploying a technical exploit. Thus, in addition to maintaining our technical vigilance, we now must strengthen our cybersecurity awareness training just to keep up with the bad guys. Cybersecurity “human factors” is an area that many organizations are not fully prepared to do effectively.

This new reality demands that we develop and deliver more powerful cybersecurity education programs that are engaging, sustainable and continuous. Toward this goal, our team at The University of Dayton Center for Cybersecurity and Data Intelligence has pioneered an engagement model called “Cyber-Mindfulness.” This approach emphasizes three critical elements that significantly enhances the responsiveness of our stakeholders: Awareness, Agency and Action.

Most cybersecurity training programs begin and end with awareness. It goes something like this: Information is provided about personal and professional cyber risks, a few horror stories are shared regarding mistakes people have made and the session concludes with a list of things to avoid. In some cases, attendees complete a quiz and the results are logged for HR tracking purposes. This “one and done” model is great for avoiding liability when a breach happens, but the evidence suggests that it is generally ineffective in helping organizations avoid most social engineering exploits.

Our Cyber-Mindfulness model engages stakeholders in continuous learning about exploits and threats. A successful “awareness” phase results in users being able to affirm that “I know cybersecurity threats are real, persistent and dangerous.” The next and perhaps most critical stage is “agency.” This phase seeks to establish a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for cybersecurity by our users. Successful results at this step might be characterized as “I believe these risks are important and meaningful to me and I can do something.”

Finally, we must move our users from awareness and agency to action. It is not unusual to discover that many users feel extremely inadequate in responding to cyber threats. Identifying “doable actions” that users can practice and achieve on their own are critical to a successful cybersecurity program. Cyber-Mindfulness can best be expressed at this phase with the statement “I will take actions to reduce risks to me and my organization – and I have practiced them!”

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Translating the concepts of Cyber-Mindfulness into effective engagement tactics requires that we approach cybersecurity as a marketing communications challenge. With that in mind, we must build and sustain a trusted relationship with our user communities. Here are six engagement strategies for establishing a cyber-mindful user community:

1. Invite users into the cybersecurity educational program with friendly messaging – absence of IT jargon and the “arrogance of expertise.”

2. Appeal to both personal and work-related cybersecurity needs. Helping users better secure their personal information assets will strengthen trust.

3. Stop “shaming and blaming” users for mistakes – instead, recognize and reward all efforts by users to engage with IT around security issues.

4. Share frequent communications with your stakeholders that blends serious and humorous information on good practices, effective behaviors and emerging threats. Offering games and prizes are great ways to keep folks thinking about cybersecurity.

5. Phish your stakeholders at least monthly – but not as a “gotcha” program. Frame this activity as our exercise for getting and staying in shape so that we can beat the bad guys. Also, be sure to report back to the community on what the “tells” were and how your team is performing.

6. Train your IT staff on how to be “user friendly” with your stakeholders. Welcoming “false positives” and encouraging users to engage early and often with your IT service team is critical to long term success.

Cyber-mindfulness seeks to build awareness, shape attitudes and impact behaviors in significant and measurable ways. Empowering users with useful information, a sense of shared responsibility and frequent opportunities to practice their cyber-defense skills will greatly assist organizations in shifting the role of users from victim to early alert agent. The goal is not to make our stakeholders into cybersecurity experts but rather to create a culture of shared responsibility around the protection of our information assets – and it all begins with cyber-mindfulness. For more information on our work, please visit our site at http://go.udayton.edu/cybermindful
In IT For the People, Clark State Promises

College students are said to be in the driver’s seat when it comes to their future, but technology may be the gas pedal that gets them to their destination faster, says one school’s vice president of IT.

People in the IT industry will talk about building networks, building mainframes or building software. Not so much with Dr. Matt Franz, the vice president of information technology at Springfield, Ohio’s Clark State Community College. To Franz, the job of his team is all about collaboration and building relationships in order to help people succeed, and it didn’t take him very long to figure that out. When Franz first enrolled in college, he considered careers in both law enforcement and accounting. “I took my first accounting class,” he says, “and I said, ‘This is definitely not for me.’”

While he pondered his next move in college, Franz found a part-time job working at the university’s computer lab to pay for tuition and to make ends meet, and quickly fell for the work, as he enjoyed the opportunity to use technology to help people. A few years later, he was hired to work at Butler Tech in Hamilton, Ohio, a vocational school where he served as a web and systems administrator, and later the assistant director of information technology. He spent nearly a decade there before landing a job at Clark State Community College as the very first hire by the president, Dr. Jo Alice Blondin.

Give and take

“The president recognized from the very beginning that we needed to change technology and how we support our students, faculty and staff,” Franz says of Blondin, who has served as a mentor to many current and future leaders. “She provided me with a clear vision and gave me the direction, support and latitude to meet it.” This backing and mentorship, coupled with Franz’s own helpful nature, led to immediate changes at Clark State, especially when it came to the relationship between the IT department and the rest of the school—which includes some 500 faculty and staff members who serve around 14,000 credit and non-credit students annually. “When I got here, there was a disconnect between the campus and technology,” he says, explaining that IT staffers are traditionally seen solely as fixers, and those they assist are simply seen as customers. This forms a divide between the people who know and the people who don’t know. To remedy this, Franz began teaching his staff of 10 to start seeing their roles differently, emphasizing the students’ needs and strategic goals over the actual work.

“We don’t deal primarily with systems, or bandwidth or performance; those are tools and metrics,” Franz says. “We support people.” After all, every time IT fixes a problem, it’s helping at least one student take a step closer to his or her goal of gaining a degree or credential, as well as a changed life for the better, he says. However, this sense of purpose is often lost in the shuffle. Franz continues to remind his team to relate to those they help and have empathy. “Understand that when someone calls you, they’ve likely already tried a lot of things,” Franz says. “They may be frustrated or they might even be standing in front of a classroom of people.”

30 minutes or less

Before Franz arrived at Clark State, the small IT team struggled to handle its workload, with most students or faculty having to wait for days in order to get issues addressed. Their new IT Help Center has changed this. Support is now handled off-site, so problems involving Blackboard, WebAdvisor, student portals, on-campus computers and account access can be handled 24-7 via phone or web. If this initial conversation doesn’t result in a fix, then the on-campus IT department takes over. Response time was cut down to an average of just 30 minutes, and the ability to offer assistance during the college’s after hours has additional advantages. After receiving student and professor feedback indicating computers should not reboot at inopportune times—such as the middle of a lecture—the IT team developed a solution that installs important updates or software in the overnight hours, and can even wipe and install entire operating systems while students sleep. “One of the most significant opportunities for improvement was the low confidence and satisfaction in overall IT support in and out of the classroom,” says Franz. “Moving to a hybrid support model allowed the IT team to dramatically improve efficiency and satisfaction.” As a result, the department’s approval rating surged from 70 percent to 97 percent in a few years.

Attention Employers

Looking for Regional Tech Talent?

The Digital Mixer is an annual event that brings together students, faculty, and IT/technology professionals to network and connect with regional employers.

Students will bring their resumes and are interested in learning more about the internships and career possibilities in the region.

Tuesday, February 6, 2018 4-6pm Apollo Room, Student Union

Register by February 2, 2018 at www.technologyfirst.org
Take it outside

The successful relationships don’t end there. “I like to build relationships not only with my internal and external stakeholders, but also with college vendors,” Franz says. “We are partners. They understand our needs, I understand them, and I try to know them on a personal basis.” The vendors also understand that solutions need to be flexible and adaptable in order to meet the needs of various clients. “Every school has the same problems,” he explains, “but they address them differently.” Franz says his various vendors include Full Measure Education, which is assisting Clark State in introducing new communication and analytics solutions to help students stay engaged with the college via his or her own preferred method of communication—be it phone calls, letters, texts, push notifications or online chats.

Franz also acknowledges Ferrilli and their technology consulting contributions to the college, especially when it comes to the student information system, which handles data related to grades, payroll, courses, sections and more. Now students can do things like view their bill in a way that breaks down each charge in each category and distills it into a format that’s much easier to see and use, and is also mobile-friendly. Franz is so close with some vendor-partners that he recalls once getting tech support during a vendor’s family event. “She responded from her daughter’s dance recital,” Franz says with a chuckle.

Leading by example

Franz says fixing problems and building relationships boils down to just one thing. “Just go out and talk to people,” he tells his team, with whom he meets regularly. “Find out the reality. Don’t sit in an office, don’t read e-mails, don’t read over metrics and statistics—go talk to people.” At least once per week, the vice president of information technology walks around the Clark State Community College campuses simply to be accessible to both students and faculty. “I am available at any time of the day, any day of the week, for anyone who wants to improve education in the classroom,” he says with a grin. “I love my job. I love what I do.” However, Franz says the best part of working at Clark State Community College is seeing the results. “My favorite day of the year, every single year, is commencement,” Franz beams. “To watch those students walk across the stage, to hear their families, to listen to them speak, it makes all of the challenging, stressful parts of the year totally and completely worth it.”
Upcoming Events

Register today at: www.technologyfirst.org

2018 CIO Forecast Panel Discussion
Leadership Panelists: Paul Stoddard, CareSource, Tim Ewart, WPAFB, Treg Gilstorf, Yaskawa Motoman, Micah Cooper, Cedarville University

Thursday, January 18th
11:00-1:30pm
Presidential Banquet Center
4572 Presidential Way, Kettering

W4T – “Meaningful Mentoring”
You won’t want to miss this exciting panel discussion! Our Panel Members include: Jennifer Carder, CareSource, Monique McGlinch, Midmark Corp, Jackie Gamblin, JYG Innovations, Tammy Gibbs, CareSource, Angela Magruder, MTS, Jill Campbell, previously Heidelberg Distributing

Wednesday, January 24
8:30-10:00 am
Business Solutions Center
1435 Cincinnati St #300, Dayton

Digital Mixer
It’s our annual networking night with area college IT/Technology majors! Students will bring their resumes and are interested in learning more about the internships and career possibilities in the region. Last year we had nearly 150 students from 7 colleges and universities attend this casual career night.

Tuesday, February 6
4:00 - 6:00 pm
Apollo Room, Student Union, Wright State University

Building partnerships for:
• cyber research
• hands-on education
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The Uncommon Sense of Information Technology Strategy

Contributed by: Afidence

Yesterday my wife asked me to provide a safe method of transportation for our children. Immediately, I thought of the safest vehicle I could and placed an order for two tanks that will be delivered to our house in about six weeks. She is going to be happy with this strategy as our children will be very safe while they are driving to school or getting ice cream. They are well worth the $16 million dollar price tag. Like this example, some IT strategies just do not make sense.

A well-defined information technology strategy is critical to any organization. It allows the IT department to create a business-centric vision. The organizations with well-defined information technology strategies operate strategically instead of reactionary. A structured approach ensures the right technologies are available at the right time to support business needs. A strategy provides transparency to IT projects with clear accountability for expenses and resources. The work performed by the IT department becomes an extension of the corporate business plan. The work is not viewed as a separate entity that might hinder progress.

So at this point, you are probably saying to yourself, “No kidding. Everyone already knows all about IT strategies.” But many companies have no IT strategy. Or the strategy is to spend as little money as possible on technology. The goal of this article is to focus on organizations that do have an IT strategy, but need help refining the policy.

Take the Time to Understand the Culture

Many organizations begin with the admiral intention of implementing a best practice process. Yet many end up with lackluster or even negative results. Why? Because they did not take the time to understand the ramifications of the change. While similarities can be drawn between most IT organizations, slight differences in methodologies or company culture can impact the effectiveness of a solution.
A WELL-DEFINED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY IS CRITICAL TO ANY ORGANIZATION

“A structured approach ensures the right technologies are available at the right time to support business needs. A strategy provides transparency to IT projects with clear accountability for expenses and resources.”

For example, consideration should be given to both the company culture and the information technology department’s culture before selecting a project management methodology. Introducing an agile or scrum approach into a strict top/down militaristic style organization will likely create a state of chaos. The people who are accustomed to receiving their requirements in a well-defined document before beginning the project will struggle to understand and adapt to their changing priorities. These organizations use a succession of information sharing processes to disseminate requirements while gaining concession or acceptance at each level. They are not designed to accommodate the level of flexibility required to implement an agile approach. In comparison, a business which employs creative and artistic associates adapting a waterfall methodology could experience feelings of stagnation and frustration with the formal and rigid processes. Most creative teams are not too interested in sitting down at the onset of a project to develop a charter, determine the project budget, and lay out all the definitive milestones.

All three of these methodologies have been used by multitudes of companies. But, that does not convey that all three are the right choice for any single organization. Understanding your team’s culture and composition will provide the best opportunities for success.

Understand What Parts of the Framework Are Right

Another strategy trap that many organizations fall into is the belief that best practices are instructions to be followed and implemented exactly as they are written. This method can create a tremendous amount of effort and cost that is just not needed. Take the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) for example. ITIL is a framework that is designed to standardize the way IT services are delivered to a business. It is an outstanding way for most companies to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and predictability of their IT services. But at the end of the day it is not a plan, but rather a framework. The ITIL framework says that you should measure the delivery of your IT services and use those measurements to make improvements to your processes. However, the IT plan might state that you should reduce the time between the first notification of an issue and when the issue is marked as resolved by 10%. Companies must be ready to understand what parts of the framework are right for their organization and then adapt those elements to be effective.

A common area of struggle is with the classification of tickets within incident management. One approach has been used for many years. It requires service desk agents to select categories to classify the type of help needed. For example, if the agent has determined that the caller is having a problem with their word processor application, the agent might select the following categories:

Software / Microsoft / Word

Or the end user might be having a hardware problem with their desktop computer which would lead to these categories:

Hardware / Lenovo / Desktop / Model XYZ

Consider the number of permutations that would be needed to support a medium sized company with 2500 unique applications and 20-30 different models of desktops and laptops. Depending on how the categories are created, a company can end up with tens of thousands of possible combinations. The potential pitfall to avoid is creating categories and sub-categories that are not necessary. When planning categories, start with the end-result in mind. Consider what you are going to do with the data from the categories. Chances are that you will use this data for two functions:

1. Categorization will determine which support team is assigned the ticket.
2. Reporting and metrics to identify top issue types.

Every effort should be made to keep the environment as simple as possible. Avoid adding extra resources and cost to your support model. The issue is not so much with having to store the data. Rather, the issue is with the time spent by the service desk agents to pick and enter the data. If the service desk handles an average of 200 calls per day and each call requires 15 seconds to categorize, then the service desk is spending over 216 hours each year just entering data. This method may or may not be an issue depending on the value you receive from the effort. For instance, let’s say you run periodic reports to determine the failure rates of various desktop computers. Then, you take action to replace the units with the highest failure rates. The cost avoidance you achieve by eliminating the end-user downtime coupled with the cost of supporting the failing technology may offset the upfront costs of capturing and analyzing the data. If, however, your organization has implemented a five to six year refresh plan for your desktop computers, and you are forced to stick to that plan regardless of failure rates, then there is no need to design and implement a system to capture and analyze the incident data. You can create a reduced set of categories that only facilitate ticket assignment and eliminate the costs associated with a more detailed system.

The Heart of a Strong IT Strategy is Common Sense

Excellent technologies, services, and methodologies are available to help you improve your IT delivery. Having a robust IT strategy within your organization is directly correlated to the level of success you will achieve. The heart of a strong IT strategy is common sense. You have the knowledge of your company culture. You understand how your team and your business customers will respond to different scenarios. It is up to you to put that knowledge to good use and make the intelligent decisions about your strategy.
EVENT SPOTLIGHT

NIST/DFARS Cybersecurity Compliance held at TEC and WBI on Springfield Street. Bill Harrison, Director of Small Business with AFRL, addressed the group on the importance of meeting the compliance standards in order to win contracts and progress our region. Thank you to all who attended these sessions!

In December, Debbie Konsoer with NCR Corp lead our CIO Council in discussion on the topic How Does Your IT Measure Up? sparking great conversation and ideas on IT metrics in your business. Thanks Debbie for an awesome discussion!

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Please welcome our newest members:

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP

SECURECYBER DEFENSE

10XTS and Bitquick.co spoke on Blockchain to our Data Analytics SIG! Extra Thanks to Mike, Slater and Jad for sharing their expertise!
Gary Grefer, President and CEO of Atlantic Foods Corp., had just successfully reinvented his company. After losing a large account that represented the majority of the company's business, Gary had led the company during its quick and successful turnaround.

"With the help of Aileron, we redefined the company, we recreated the culture, and we restructured the organization. We went through a lot of hard work with a strong team," recalls Gary.

The company exceeded much of Gary's near-term expectations during the transformation. In fact, the company hit its five-year goals within 18 months. In less than two years, the business grew about 60 percent.

After the rebound came a large amount of introspection for Gary. "The success was such that I had difficulty with setting a new vision going forward. I was struggling with it over a few months," says Gary. "We overachieved in a short period of time and I didn’t anticipate that."

No matter how successful, all small business owners have experienced uncertainties, fears or even self-doubt at one time or another.

But what if, like Gary, you find so much unprecedented success that you question whether you are the right person to continue leading your company? Here are 4 steps to take to help channel this kind of introspection into something positive.

1. Keep asking “why.”

Gary says his introspection focused on one question: Where do I want to go next?

"I was not coming up with any good answers and, as a result, over a period of time it prompted me to wonder if the organization would be better served by someone else carrying the flag," he says.

In an effort to stay as objective as possible, Gary focused on repeatedly asking himself the question, “Why?”

"Why are we here? Why do we do what we do? Why do we want to grow?" These are the powerful questions Gary asked himself. “[The process involved] just really peeling that back, and getting to what matters. For me, that process was not comfortable because I wasn’t coming up with answers—but that’s okay.”

Starting with asking “why” may not provide immediate solutions, but it can provide clarity around what’s behind your fears, motivations, or self-doubt.

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2. Get perspective.

One of Gary’s first steps when determining if he was the right person to continue to lead the company, was reaching out for support. He then took the time to make investments in the team around him—including making a time and educational investment in himself.

Gary worked on strategy with his Business Advisor, Tony Collins, and he attended the Course for Presidents at Aileron. He attended other sessions including the Know Your Customer workshop and took advantage of his Aileron peer group. Reaching out to other business owners and having an advisor was beneficial during a time in which Gary says he was struggling to come up with a new vision for the company.

“That’s when the questions were beginning to hit me…I was really struggling with coming up with a vision. I couldn’t answer, “What’s next?” His peers’ perspectives and support from his business advisor helped him continue to work through his unanswered questions.

3. Free yourself from ego.

Gary says his situation and decision-making process also required letting go of his ego. “Business owners and founders often have egos and sometimes those egos serve us pretty well, but there are times when, we need to separate from our ego and to be able to set it aside—at least for me.”

“When you pull ego out of it, and see what’s there, then it becomes a little clearer. That’s not necessarily easy. I’m not sure everybody’s up for that challenge,” he adds. “Placing employee’s and customer’s needs before my own was helpful in managing my ego,” he adds.

4. Clarify your personal vision.

Forced to explore and think deeply across all areas of his life, Gary is still defining his personal vision, and the company vision—and how the two come together.

As a small business owner, sometimes your personal vision can get put aside. You can easily get caught up in survival mode, says Gary, where motivation is enough to get you to your destination, just so that the company will survive. “But once survival is no longer at stake, then you really have to come up with something else,” he says.

“For me, I have not been able to clarify a nice, clean vision [yet]. There has been great value in the process of searching for that vision. It is that ‘why’ that I keep asking that has really stimulated this process. And that ‘why’ really does come out of searching for your [personal and company] vision.”

For now, Gary has brought in a COO, which will help the company evolve and continue to grow. “While I’m still the CEO, I can picture that there’ll be a period of time, a transition, where he will carry the flag more.” And, in the meantime, Gary says he will keep asking “Why?”

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