

ARE YOU BURNED OUT? MAYBE IT'S THE STRESS OF PERFECTION!

MiC Monthly Newsletter



CYBERTIVITIES



BYOD!
Happy hour meet and greet! Open discussion

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The issue with perfection

What do you think of when you hear the words information security, cybersecurity, privacy, or prevent, detect, respond, recover, or reactive, proactive, predictive? My guess is that each of these words, despite being “squishy” and hard to define, creates a level of stress in cybersecurity professionals. It is the stress that these words require you to be perfect and know exactly what you are doing, at all times, which causes many professionals to lose their minds. Add that to the sometimes-male character trait of wanting to fix every problem or that every problem has a solution it is no wonder there is a burnout problem in our community.

We want individuals to be attracted to the field and build their careers with the goal of being perfect, i.e. preventing all problems, known and unknown before they happen. Staying fully knowledgeable of the “cybersecurity threat landscape” in all industries whether it applies to their daily job or not. How can we market that? Great career, high paying, and perfection required.

It's time to see cybersecurity for what it is, a risk mitigation/management function. You are not being employed to prevent all threats from happening all the time 24x7, 365 days a year. Cybersecurity professionals exist to reduce your exposure to cybersecurity threats and recover, very fast, when you have a breach. Expecting your cybersecurity team to be more than that is setting them up for failure because they are not perfect.

CEOs (and Boards) need to analyzed cybersecurity like any business risk and build in a certain level of risk exposure from the beginning. Firing your CISO when you have a breach because he/she did not prevent it from happening, i.e. they were not perfect, is nonsensical and only creates more stress to be perfect within your cybersecurity team. Which in turn adds to our inability to attract people to the field.

Message from the CEO

Dear MiC Community,

This is the last in a series of discussions we've had regarding "Pause... Push, Pass or Pivot: How to make decisions when you are facing career challenges." In May we discussed the types of situations when I have decided to push. In June we discussed when I have decided to pass. This month we are talking about pivoting. In basketball the pivot can be powerful, you can use it with or without the ball, put your foot in the ground, and to go around someone or if you are stuck in the corner, pivot around and pass the ball. Don't travel!

When in my career that I've decided to pivot? When it came to the position or title I held at an organization. I have pivoted so many times it can be dizzying. From an info systems engineer to law school, to the FBI, to entrepreneur, to academia, to corporate, back to entrepreneur, back to corporate. Two things are certain, I have never let a role or position define my future and everything I have done has been in the areas of information security and/or privacy.

I've seen information security from the vantage point of a hands-on technologist, as an entrepreneur and seller of consulting services, as a professor, as a strategist, as an attorney, and as manager and corporate executive. What I can honestly say is that at some point I outgrew each role. Either that or I am just not ever satisfied doing just one thing! But I digress. In the past, I viewed each role as a stepping stone where I would sit for a while, pay my dues, and then continue moving upward towards my destination.

So, when is it time to pivot from the position you are in? For me, it was when it became easy, when I was no longer challenged in my day-to-day activities and not growing as an individual. I had goals and being an individual contributor for the rest of my career was never an option for me, my mind wanted to absorb and add to my subject matter expertise in multiple areas.

As an information/cyber security professional, you must be careful because sometimes you can be hired into a role based on a specific need, for example, a security analyst, and when you get burnt out or most likely bored with handling virus tickets all day you look around and your opportunities may be limited. When interviewing for a role, don't be afraid to ask specific questions about opportunities to grow your subject matter expertise outside of what you are being hired to do. Get an understanding from your future boss of his/her philosophy on training and cross-training before you accept the role. Also, if possible, put aside a few extra dollars per month as an investment in yourself for future training. Because the fact is we all come to a point in our careers where we have outgrown a role and we need to anticipate it!



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"The lesson: Don't ever lose your pivot foot!"

- Mary N. Chaney