

IS IT A SKILLS GAP, A TALENT GAP, OR A LABOR SHORTAGE?

MiC Monthly Newsletter



Did you know (ISC)² has launched the 2021 Cybersecurity Workforce Survey? Have your opinion heard by taking the study today!



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Discovering Cybersecurity Talent

There are a lot of terms being thrown around about the state of the cybersecurity workforce, more specifically, the discussions around their being a “skills gap” or “talent shortage” and some even just honestly recognize that there is just a lack of bodies in the cybersecurity field or i.e. a labor shortage.

So what do we do? There is no need to think outside the box here, we just need to repurpose people to fill the gap! The ISACA's State of Cybersecurity 2021, Part 1 report talks about a lot of things but there are a few things we would like to point out.

There is much talk about a lack of students choosing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) as a career and point to this as a reason for these “gaps”. Basically, marketing the cybersecurity field as “technical” only. The biggest problem with this storyline is, as reported in the survey, that “the overwhelming gap in today’s cybersecurity workforce is reportedly not technical but rather a lack of soft skills.” Soft skills meaning skills like “communication skills, leadership, critical thinking, teamwork, work ethic, and positive attitudes.” By the way, this lack of soft skills, is the reason Minorities in Cybersecurity exists!

What does that mean? Well to us that means our labor shortage can be solved by training up those folks that have strong soft skills to meet the cybersecurity labor shortage issue. There are plenty of people out there that can be trained to be everything we need whether that is through the traditional college route, teaching current employees new skills or as CyberUp’s Executive Director Tony Bryan, says in the study, “Pathways such as apprenticeship offer a low-cost, low-risk, faster way to ready a workforce.” He continues, “the cybersecurity workforce shortage persists and likely will continue until there is an honest analysis of what is and is not working.”

What is not working is the same excuses, there comes a time when we need to stop complaining about the problem and actually solve the problem in nontraditional ways. Stop using the “firewall” of technical know-how as a reason to exclude!

Messegae from the CEO

Dear MiC Community,

As promised we are going to pick up with the conversation from last month regarding “Pause.... Push, Pass or Pivot: How to make decisions when you are facing career challenges.” Last month we discussed the types of situations that I have decided to push, and for me, it came in the form of me pushing myself and growing through people challenges. This month we are going to discuss the Pass. It is playoff season and ya’ll know how much I like sports so when learning to play basketball there are several types of passes they teach you. There are many variations, but the basics are the bounce pass, chest pass, overhead pass, one-hand push pass, and the baseball pass. Each of these passes are situation-specific and your success depends on using them effectively. Passing the ball typically means you can move freely without the specific pressure of handling the ball. You can get yourself in a better position to score.

How does this apply to career challenges? Well, whenever you are having challenges remember you always have to pause and assess the situation before you act. I've found that I most often have passed the ball when I was in the middle of a company culture challenge. Trust me when I say I have witnessed my fair share of bad cultures, whether it was the overall corporate culture, or just a bad boss (or leadership team) creating unnecessary stress to the overall team creating a harmful, subculture. Looking at those situations I can remember pausing and making the calculated step to pass the ball.

Bad cultures are hard and unless you are in the proper position to facilitate a change across a significant portion of the organization you have to ask yourself is it worth it? I've found that to do battle with a bad culture means you have to exert a lot of mental and emotional energy into things that are not directly related to doing your job. This creates a level of distraction and feeling that you have to guard your role and document every contribution you make to the team. When I experienced a bad culture, my job was to strategize and determine my exit strategy, I found that I could do that better if passed the ball. That did not mean I did not deliver, I always delivered and met my goals and objectives, but I “just” delivered, not “over” delivered. I only did what I was asked to do and no longer believed or vested in the organization to do more. I've always said that cybersecurity is my passion, I love it, I feel like a fish in water when I am bringing new solutions and leading teams, however, if I dread going in to work every day because of the culture, it would make me feel robbed. That was normally my sign to pass the ball!



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The Lesson: There are too many cybersecurity jobs to suffer in a culture that doesn't work for you. Is it time for you to pass the ball?
