Life-skills I have learned from mentors in my career as a CISO

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Mentorship

» Definition of Mentorship – “…experienced and trusted advisor”

» How I view Mentorship
  – sharing of information, life experiences, support
  – mentor to the mentee to help them improve their life, career, and spiritual development

» 30 years in Information Technology and Information Security
  – Have always had mentors that helped without asking

» From these mentors I have learned 5 life skills that I have found to be critical
  – Tenacity
  – Time & Resource Management
  – Service Delivery
  – Risk Management
  – Strategic Planning
Tenacity

» First mentor was my father.
  – Didn’t always agree with each other, learned the importance of tenacity.
  – Critical skill, invaluable in dynamic changing environments where you don’t always control the resources around you.
  – Applies to being a CISO
    • Stressful environments that are brutal and you will want to give up and change your mind on a strategic decision.
    • Be steadfast in the middle of that storm, reevaluate the available options
    • Select a path and continue pushing forward.
    • Much of his guidance I use today when I mentor my sons and my security teams I have been blessed to lead at Webroot.
First career mentors were assigned to me when I made Chief Petty Officer in the US Navy

- Trained and mentored by more senior Chiefs
  - Servant leaders to our divisions
  - Creative in managing time, people, equipment and programs with limited resources.
- Assigned multiple senior professionals as mentors
  - Transition from being a senior technician to new role; the manager of a 35-person department.
  - Hard time learning to manage people, liked computers better (no issues).
  - Hard work with my mentors, learned to focus on the positive each person had to offer
  - Looked for roles they could fill that would provide them and our command value.

Crucial skill I learned during this time (Building Teams)

- Build teams around an experience team member
- Provide projects and with a light touch guide them
- Allow more experienced team member a chance to lead
- Step in when needed for feedback or to change the priority of projects.
- Provides room for the team to either fail or succeed
Critical skill, developed as I transitioned to Federal Civil Service in support of the US Navy

Would serve for over six years as a CISO, Deputy-CIO, Privacy Officer and network architect.

- CIO mentored me on managing cross-functional technical teams
- Provide services to 35 different departments
- Developed view that cyber security is actually a service my teams provide to our departments (customers)
- Use principles of continuous improvement
  - Documented what services the departments required from us for them to be successful
  - Upgraded security program and budget
    - Provide cyber as a service tailored to departments specific business needs.
    - First time looked beyond a regulatory framework to understand the reality of how cyber security is intertwined in all business processes.
    - Clarity enabled me to provide crucial security services that were actually needed by the organization to meet its strategic business requirements.
Risk Management

» Security skill I had been developing for years
  – Centered on the view of cyber security as an integral component of enterprise risk management.
    • First half of my career, followed a pretty rigid definition of information security and risk management
    • Separate disciplines that existed in parallel.
» Working with my mentor, friend and co-author Matt Stamper, changed perception
  – Peers in the CISO community, see cyber as part of a business’s overall risk fabric.
  – Look at cyber security as a continuous life-cycle process
  – Focused on reducing my organizations exposure to risk.
» Modern CISO
  – Role as security executive, explain value of enterprise security program
  – Help organization understand
    • Business, not the CISO, owns risk
    • CISO is there help the company manage it.
Final skill still learning today from mentors

- CISO, responsibility to understand organizations risk and technology portfolios
- Design a security program that employs the correct amount of technology, controls and policy to mitigate any issues.
- Not an easy process, another continuous life-cycle
  - Inventory
  - Assessment
  - Scanning
  - Remediation
  - Monitoring
- Results of the assessment process
  - Use to create and prioritize a list of controls that are immature and require remediation
  - Remediation results in a list of projects
    - CISO to acquire resources and champion the value of them to the business
    - Executive skill CISO’s must master and be willing to collaborate with their peers and ask for assistance when needed.
Questions, Rants?

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