"Negotiating risk, security and spending across the board"

Accenture Security convened a half-day virtual summit, Operation: Next, on March 24, 2021, to explore Operational Technology (OT) security challenges and opportunities. The program consisted of topics including how OT security stakeholders, across various industries, are getting program buy-in, articulating risk, maximizing budget and implementing programs. Participants, including a number of Accenture Cybersecurity Forum members, heard candid peer-to-peer discussions about solutions and strategies that are advancing cybersecurity programs from the field to the boardroom.

Three ACF members served as panelists on a summit event titled, "Negotiating risk, security and spending across the board." Participants included a global enterprise chief security officer (CSO), an experienced corporate board member and a security expert with deep operating management experience. The group discussed leading practices for building enterprise alignment on risk management, security and spending.

Major challenges

The CSO said defining governance roles for security in the OT space is essential to managing risk. "Compliance standards are the baseline, but compliance doesn't always equal security," he said. "It's important to demonstrate to the business, the C-suite and the board not only that security understands the criticality of the continuity of operations, but also is working in partnership with the business segments to manage risk."

The subject-matter expert said management expects answers to several fundamental questions:

- How do we execute the strategy of the CEO and maintain the resilience necessary to meet strategic goals?
- How do we balance investments around costs and risks? What do we do or not do in terms of security?
- How can we ensure seamless collaboration between information security and OT to keep operations running, protect against threats and ensure resiliency so we can serve customers better?

The board member added that boards want to know that security is being proactive in helping to move the company forward. "Maybe you're not perfect," he said. "But are you being proactive in taking advantage of changing technology in a safe manner?"

Stop/continue/start

The panel was asked to recommend activities that security leaders should stop, continue and start:

Stop:

- **Viewing business areas as separate fiefdoms**. "We need to assure the board and C-suite that we have baseline standards across the enterprise and don't have weaknesses in certain areas," said the security expert.
- **Stop buying the latest tools; instead, better deploy the tools you have. "**Be great at the basics before moving on to what may look like the next shiny object," said the subject-matter expert.
- **"Stop technobabble**," said the board member. "It may sound simple, but be articulate and talk in a manner that everyone in the boardroom can understand."

Continue:

- **Undertake proactive, predictive and smart initiatives** such as advanced penetration testing, and improving OT security capabilities.
- **Continue learning** about how the business makes money, how to communicate in ways that make sense to the business and where business partners are driving innovations," said the subject-matter expert.
- **Foster transparency.** "The board wants to know about the stuff you're worried about so they can understand the risks we're facing," said the board member.

Start:

- **Being more nimble.** Create a risk register to bring focus to the areas that are most important to the enterprise and scale back on areas that are less strategic.
- **Testing defenses constantly**, because adversaries are always looking for vulnerabilities.
- **Partnering with government agencies.** Look for ways they can contribute to collective security by, for example, sharing threat intelligence.
- **Focusing on the crown jewels that matter,** such as those capabilities that serve customers.
- **Blending teams**, not just IT and OT security, but also include adjacent functions such as HR, M&A and corporate development.
- **Appreciate and reward transparency**, particularly in light of attacks.
- **Clean up the technology landscape.** The board member said, "Companies need to be more strategic about limiting vulnerabilities and eliminating technologies that can create risks.

Conclusion

Enterprise risk management is a team sport that requires a variety of capabilities, a cohesive team, excellent execution of the basics and a willingness to adapt to changing conditions. The CISO can and should be a key player but the best aren't just technologists. According to this panel, the leaders are transparent about risks and challenges, support continuous learning, help build collaborative teams and, like the CEO, share a laser-like focus on winning in the marketplace.

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