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CYBERSECURITY AND THE BOARD:

3 Steps to Communicate Strengths, Weaknesses and Needs

To win support and resources from corporate boards, cybersecurity professionals must focus more on reducing business risk and less on technical metrics. To that end, some suggestions:

Avoid promises you can't keep.

You might want to wow the board with assurances that the company is protected against attacks. But with threats mounting daily, this is a promise you can't keep. A better approach is to identify what you are able to control:

If there are holes in the company's defenses:

- Bring it to the board's attention by highlighting an area of cost savings.
- Explain how funds can be reallocated to close some of the gaps without additional funding.

Use the right metrics

Quantifying the company's cybersecurity posture by how many products are in place or how many threats a firewall has intercepted in the last month is counterproductive. This kind of information fails to convey the true state of the business' defenses. Remember:

They want to know how prepared the cybersecurity team is to disarm any attacks. This includes:

- An assessment of how aware employees are of cybersecurity risk and steps they must take to mitigate them.
- The company's risk profile compared to other members of its industry.
- Progress toward closing vulnerability gaps.

Dashboards are your friend

One effective communication tool is a dashboard that can visually contrast the items above over time. You can measure, track, and ultimately report to the board on the organization's efforts to manage its biggest cybersecurity risk factors, including:

- Exploitation of the company brand.
- Human error and progress of cybersecurity awareness training.
- Progress on efforts to protect the brand.

Bottom line

CISOs and other cybersecurity execs err when they view their time with the board as an opportunity to solicit more funds. A much more effective approach is to describe the company's key vulnerabilities, the steps that have been taken to shore up those risks and any weak points or shortcomings that should be addressed.

Dive deeper into this topic by reading this article from Mimecast.

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