Closing the skills gap with cybersecurity training

By Doros Hadjizenonos   12 Oct 2018

To close the skills gap, organisations and academic institutions must take proactive measures when it comes to cybersecurity training.

![Doros Hadjizenonos]

Doros Hadjizenonos is Regional Sales Director Southern Africa at Fortinet

One of the most promising ways to do this is by starting from the ground up and adding cybersecurity curriculums to schools and opening learning institutions dedicated to teaching this trade.

The cybersecurity field has a 0% unemployment rate and offers competitive compensation – two features that make it a desirable option for students entering college. Children should be introduced to the field as early as high school, and have ample opportunities for gaining knowledge and basic skills throughout primary and higher education. In some instances, entire institutions are being devoted to cybersecurity, such as the National College of Cybersecurity opening in the UK.

Promote cybersecurity programmes

Organisations can also be proactive in promoting cybersecurity programs on campuses by hosting career talks and attending career fairs. Additionally, they can leverage programs to give students hands-on training in the field.

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For example, Fortinet's Network Security Academy (FNSA) works with academic institutions and non-profits to provide training and certification opportunities to interested students from around the world. Gaining such experience early on is crucial, as 52% of organisations say practical, hands-on experience is the most important skill, with 7 in 10 stating security certifications are more useful than security degrees.

Aside from training students and the next-generation workforce, cybersecurity is a viable career option for those looking to change careers or those re-entering the workforce after an absence. Like FNSA, cybersecurity training and certification programs should be open to veterans and those seeking return-to-work programs. This can also help to close the gender gap in the industry, as 90% of return-to-work candidates are women, while the cybersecurity industry consists of just 11%

women.

Invest in employees

Finally, organisations can invest in their own employees who already have technical skills and backgrounds by providing them with cybersecurity specific training and continuing education. Fortinet offers just such an opportunity to technical professionals through our Network Security Expert (NSE) Program. This eight-level certification program is designed for technical professionals and provides courses, exams, and hands-on practicums to master complex network security concepts. By enrolling members of their IT teams in this or similar programs, organizations can help fill security talent shortages from within their own employee pool.

Final thoughts

The cybersecurity skills gap continues to grow. Organisations cannot continue to hope that candidates who meet strict requirements will come along if they are not proactive in promoting and offering training. This is why academia and organizations must work together to invest in cybersecurity training and curriculums that will prepare prospects for this high-demand field.

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