

## **The State of the Infosec Industry: 2004 Ends with Optimism for 2005**

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### **2004: The Year in Review**

2004 turned out to be a better year for information security professionals looking to advance their careers and find new opportunities.

Corporations, professional services firms and product vendors all showed an increase in hiring activity in a variety of areas. Part of this increased activity is the fact that new technologies and services are requiring security professionals to get involved in a multitude of activities that will enable their companies to be competitive while remaining secure.

As the year unfolded, a number of our corporate clients began hiring in a few specific areas. Application security has continued to be a major focus as companies continue to address the significant threats they face from application-related vulnerabilities and exposures. Candidates with the ability to develop internal programs to assess and remediate application vulnerabilities are in great demand, as are those who can educate developers on secure software engineering practices.

### *SOX*

Sarbanes-Oxley(SOX) has been another driving force behind increased staffing requirements. As a result of SOX, publicly traded companies and their business partners have been forced to develop and implement controls that guarantee the validity and security of their information assets. This has led to a huge demand for information security professionals who can conduct SOX 404 assessment programs and provide the remediation strategies necessary to achieve compliance. Not surprisingly, the majority of SOX-driven hiring activity can be found in the professional services firms. Beyond the corporations and the consulting firms, SOX has also influenced the security product vendor market. Many security vendors have repositioned or enhanced their products in an effort to develop solutions that address SOX requirements. In general, candidates with Identity and Access Management skills are in high demand. The reason for this demand is that IdAM solutions are a critical way of ensuring the integrity of critical data by controlling user access and permission levels. IdAM has always been a critical part of an organization's security infrastructure, but with SOX, it's more important than ever.

In spite of all the activity and attention that SOX has created, this is just the beginning of the trend to increase staffing in areas of compliance and governance. As regulatory requirements continue to evolve, corporations will continue to direct their efforts to strengthen their assessment and remediation capabilities.

### *Consolidations*

2004 proved to also be a year of consolidation, with many mergers and acquisitions. MacAfee acquired Foundstone, Symantec-@Stake, BeTrusted-Trusecure, VeriSign-Guardent, Watchfire-Sanctum, just to name a few. I know someone who worked for three different companies in 2004 but never changed jobs. I believe that we will continue to see many vendor consolidations in 2005.

### **Forecast for 2005**

I believe that 2005 will be a promising year for information security practitioners. The economy is gaining traction, and we already see an increase in the demand for qualified information security professionals in the first quarter. (ISC)2 has declared 2005 to be the Year of the Information Security Professional. The declaration revolves around a global initiative to bring recognition, appreciation and support for information security professionals worldwide and the information security industry.

According to Jim Duffy, CISSP, president and CEO of (ISC)2, the initiative was motivated by the conclusions of the first comprehensive study of the global information security workforce, which showed the demand for professionals would more than double by 2008 to 2.1 million worldwide. The Americas, with 36.1% of the market, will compose the largest market opportunity in terms of information security staffing.

Conducted by IT industry analyst firm IDC for (ISC)2, the study said that the growth of the profession was being driven by competing demands on industry and government to expand access to services and information, new stringent regulatory requirements, and the need for proactive solutions to circumvent emerging threats.

The good news is that the study also indicated that incremental but healthy growth is anticipated in the information security industry in the coming years. They attribute the growth to a number of drivers in the marketplace including government regulations, new technologies and proactive security. So I'm not alone in my optimism for the new year. The trick is to make sure you are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities as they unfold.

#### *Certifications*

One way to differentiate yourself from other candidates is to secure a certification in information security. The IDC study showed that 92% of security hiring managers consider certifications as an important part of their hiring decisions for the following reasons. First, they attest that an individual has obtained and tested to a predetermined level of knowledge in particular security domains. Secondly, certifications afford them some degree of comfort as to an individual's competency/knowledge level. If you haven't done so yet, make obtaining an information security certification a personal goal for 2005.

#### **Conclusion**

Regardless of the amount of growth 2005 will bring to our industry, one truth remains. There is an increasing trend of our most advanced security clients to utilize a risk-based approach to information security. In order to be successful, security practitioners are going to have to develop an understanding of the business that their company is in and be able to develop and communicate risk mitigation strategies to their clients and customers. Operational risk and governance are areas that information security professionals need to start getting their arms around. It is more important than ever that security professionals understand the balance between business and technology so they can make better risk-based security decisions in the coming year.

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