Create visual dashboards for impactful cybersecurity communications

You previously learned about security stakeholders, the people responsible for protecting the data and systems of various departments of an organization. An entry-level analyst might communicate directly or indirectly with these individuals. If you do end up communicating with a stakeholder, it’s important to use the right method of communication. This reading will further elaborate on the significance of using visual dashboards to communicate information to stakeholders. Dashboards can include charts, graphs, and even infographics. You’ll learn more about when to use visual communication strategies in this reading.

Using visuals to communicate effectively

Security is about protecting a company from threats that can affect its reputation and finances. Oftentimes, responding to threats quickly and effectively depends on clear communications between the stakeholders who are involved.

In the cybersecurity field, the stakeholders you'll deal with will often be busy with other responsibilities. Showing them important information visually is a great way to gain their input and support to address security challenges that arise. Visuals help provide these decision-makers with actionable information that can help them identify potential risks to the organization's security posture.

Visual dashboards

A **visual dashboard** is a way of displaying various types of data quickly in one place. Visual dashboards are useful tools that can be used to communicate stories to stakeholders about security events—especially when they involve numbers and data.

Dashboards can be simple or complex depending on the information you're communicating. A simple dashboard might contain a single chart, while a complex one can include multiple detailed charts, graphs, and tables. Deciding which type to use will depend on the situation and story you are telling. However, attention to detail and accurately representing information is important

anytime you're communicating data to stakeholders.

Pro tip: Programs like Google Sheets and Apache OpenOffice are tools that can be used to create visual dashboards.

When to use visual communication

Security is often a team effort. Everyone must work together to ensure an organization is properly protected from bad actors. Knowing how to communicate with your colleagues is a big part of the team-focused aspect.

Sometimes it’s enough to send a simple email update. Other times you might want to include a document attachment that further elaborates on a specific topic. A simple phone call can also be valuable because it allows you to quickly communicate the necessary information without having to wait for a response to an email or message. Other times, the best way to communicate is through visuals.

For example, consider a situation where your supervisor has asked you to provide them with results from a recent internal audit of five different departments within the organization. The audit gathered data showing how many phishing emails each department clicked over the last five months. This is an ideal opportunity to tell this story using visualization tools. Instead of sending an email that simply describes what the findings are, a graph or chart will clearly illustrate those findings, making them easier for the stakeholder to understand quickly and easily.

Key takeaways

Stakeholders, like the rest of the security team, are busy. With that in mind, be clear and concise any time you communicate with them. This makes everyone’s job easier! It’s important to recognize when visual dashboards are the most effective communication method. A visual dashboard is often best to use when you’re communicating information that involves numbers and data.

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