

Outcome-based Approach to Security

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A security organization's comprehensive strategic plan is a valuable tool for communicating its vision to managers, employees, customers, partners and the public. Above all it is used to align resources and guide decision-making to accomplish priorities and established objectives.

An integral component of strategic planning is an Outcome-Based approach through which the vision of the organization is translated into practice.

An outcome-based approach is the principle utilized to guide an organization's security operations where each tactical objective is measured or supported by established evidence ensuring the achievement of the organization's overall targeted performance.

In this vast and complex realm of security it is well known that diversification and adaptability are key strengths an organization must develop to give it the flexibility it requires to achieve the highest capabilities. The methodology that can provide the organization with the ability to accomplish these objectives is a sustainable Outcome-Based Security model.

An outcome-based security model is flexible, sustainable and efficient. It allows the security organization to determine for themselves the best possible and practical security measures to achieve its desired outcomes. A security program built in this manner can:

- Specify the desired outcomes that the organization wants to accomplish;
- Establish performances measurement objectives to measure the desired outcomes;
- Ensure that performance measurements track progress in achieving the objectives for the organization.

The key factors in an outcome-based security approach are:

- Flexibility – it allows the organization to shift resources quickly to higher risk areas. Recent security threats show that individuals or groups will seek to exploit perceived gaps in a security's organization architecture. Security organizations need the ability to adapt quickly to pre-empt emerging threats. Having this flexibility to tailor their security resources puts them in a position to meet the threat.
- Sustainability – the approach allows for security threats to be effectively addressed in a way that does not hamper the continued growth of the organization. It is well documented that prescriptive standards and recommended practices will not keep pace with the evolving security threats. Prescriptive measures need to be rewritten each time a new threat emerges and even then they may not be able to cover all possibilities.

- Efficiency – by using risk assessments to determine how a security outcome is best achieved it will also identify the most efficient use of resources. A risk assessment allows for the most efficient balance of resources to meet the threat and helps to create a proactive culture which encourages innovation and flexibility to develop best practices.

In order to achieve a successful Outcomes-Based program the organization needs to build a basic framework that can be easily understood by all parties and efficiently implemented. A successful framework should contain the following activities:

Step 1: What do you want to accomplish? What constitutes success of the program and how it will achieve that success? Develop the objectives for the program.

Step 2: Outline the desired intended impacts the program can provide by determine the outcomes for the program.

Step 3: Determine how to measure and monitor the outcomes of the program.

Step 4: Outline a systematic data collection methodology for the program.

Step 5: Determine if the program has been effective in achieving its intended outcomes from the data analysis, evaluation, and reporting.

Step 6: Determine whether to continue the program and make improvements.

Once developed and adopted throughout the organization, an Outcome-Based model would allow the organization to adapt to changing realities by selecting or modifying its countermeasures without compromising the established strategic security objectives.

Summary:

Security threats to an organization can and do manifest differently in different organizations, and even differ by local factors within each organization. A continuous review of the different levels of threats is required leading sometimes to adoption of new counter-measures. The most efficient and effective way for a security organization to ensure it has the capability and means to deal with threats is to develop an Outcomes Based Security Model as its central core.