

US Cybersecurity Tzar sets out his stall

Howard Schmidt, former eBay and Microsoft executive and adviser to George Bush has been appointed US Cyber Security Chief. Interviewed by Infosecurity Europe, he outlined the problems we face in an environment where “Data is the gold, silver and diamonds of the world we live in today”.

Schmidt has been charged with uniting agencies and organisations in the US to defend the country from Cyber attack. He talked about three major predictions that will have to be addressed if collectively we are to withstand the rising tide of cybercrime:

- Legacy ICT equipment must be removed and replaced. Business especially cannot afford to keep plugging holes- business systems need to be built from the ground up with security in mind.
- Software and applications are increasingly being used as a foothold to gain access to systems and the valuable data within
- IT security will become a business problem, not a computer problem

Schmidt argues that cyber security must become a shared responsibility, with vendors, end users and law enforcement/government all taking part. The cross border nature of cybercrime combined with an absence of appropriate laws to prosecute cyber criminals has been challenging for law enforcement. The work of the Council of Europe has done much to harmonize laws, but arguably this work will need to go further and draw in more nations for it to be effective.

Schmidt cites increased information sharing between private sector, governments and law enforcement as being crucial in bringing cyber criminals to justice.

There is positive news as for virtually every problem and threat, there is a solution out there, whether this be technology based or through education. Organisations need to work hard on implementation to ensure that solutions are seamless- often security is subsumed by conflicting priorities and fiscal constraints.

The three future priorities to a safer cyber reality, Schmidt argues are:

- The adoption of wide spread encryption is vital. Data security is king!
- Software producers must work hard to remove the vulnerabilities from applications
- The end user must be educated to understand the processes behind what they are doing

Howard Schmidt was interviewed at the Infosecurity Europe show in 2008, prior to his recent appointment as US Cyber Security Chief. The podcast can be found by clicking on the following link:

http://www.infosec.co.uk/page.cfm/EMSLinkClick=1424_755_542_302685_5521_5171

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