



Assessment Quickly Identifies Suspected IT Security Issues, Prepares PUD to Address Vulnerabilities

With the increasing number of news stories about US utilities being hacked, the CTOs of these organizations are prioritizing the strength of their IT security posture in an effort to thwart a cyber-attack. It's commonplace for incoming CTOs to commission an external agency to assess the security posture of the organization they inherit. This external perspective provides a baseline for the CTO to address security vulnerabilities and prioritize IT projects.

Challenge

When a new CTO joined a rural utility in eastern Washington, one of the executive's first priorities was to gain a realistic understanding of threats to the organization's mission – to provide uninterrupted power and fiber connectivity to the county. Electricity and connectivity are essential for the daily existence of this community, making speed and accuracy of the assessment crucial. For a partner with the expertise to quickly deliver a comprehensive IT security assessment, the client chose Kalles Group.

Approach

It was imperative that leadership immediately understand the status of the IT infrastructure. The new CTO needed an assessment of the state of the IT organization that clearly defined and communicated IT weaknesses and vulnerabilities so that remedies could be prioritized.

Kalles Group would employ investigation, technical expertise, and process discipline in order to navigate the organization. This would enable the team to get the in-depth, candid details essential to formulate a credible security risk assessment and a clear picture of the organization's IT security posture.

Solution

Needing answers quickly, the CTO gave the Kalles Group team six weeks to perform the security risk assessment. This meant Kalles Group had to come up to speed quickly to understand the fundamentals of this electric utility, and gain a keen understanding of how the IT systems worked to support the organization's mission. This challenge would require sophistication to ask the right questions in order to address the organization's vulnerabilities within a compressed timeframe.

The Kalles Group team dove deep to understand the IT systems, organizational dynamics, and cultural specifics. Our team spoke to dozens of employees and reviewed over 70 systems critical to the mission, from power generation and distribution to billing and metering. To encourage participation, our team demonstrated IT expertise, sensitivity to the organization's culture, and adoption of the company's vocabulary and metrics in order to align with current risk efforts, effectively communicate with employees during the interview phase, and clearly communicate the assessment results. Skillful questioning and demonstrated understanding of IT and telecommunications systems helped gain trust from the employees, winning their cooperation to expedite the assessment.

Results

Due to savvy navigation by the Kalles Group team, people were forthcoming, providing the deep insight the team needed to understand the issues employees faced. Equally important was looking past the symptoms to identify root causes. One of the biggest problems identified was within organizational dynamics – employees were operating and prioritizing within their silos, sometimes without the benefit of an accurate enterprise perspective. The Kalles Group team recommended solutions that would reduce organizational silos to ensure projects addressed the priorities of the greater organization.

With a thorough risk assessment and recommendations, the CTO had a clear perspective of the threats that IT posed to the organization’s mission. The risk assessment structure enabled the CTO to confidently understand the underlying causes of risk, how the organization was addressing risks, and which risks were the most critical. Prioritized remediation aligned with enterprise strategy would avoid the rushed chaos of patching security holes as they were discovered. With the perspective provided by the assessment, the CTO was able to move ahead, confidently communicating and solving challenges.

ROADMAP FOR SUCCESS



CONTACT US

We believe that aligning capability, people, and purpose is the key to delivering better experiences and outcomes for our clients. If you're interested in learning more about our consulting services and solutions, email us at solutions@kallesgroup.com or visit our website at www.kallesgroup.com.

1420 5th Avenue, Suite 2200
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 652-3378