

PROFILES IN CONFIDENCE

Highlighting information security
leaders who are leading the way
for confident security programs



DARREN DEATH CISO, ASRC FEDERAL

HEADQUARTERS: BELTSVILLE, MD

EMPLOYEES: 10,000 +

ANNUAL REVENUE: \$4 BILLION

THE POWER OF MENTORSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

“One of the biggest challenges I’ve experienced is being given jobs that, at the start, were beyond my ability to do,” says Darren Death, the Enterprise Cyber Security Governance Officer at ASRC Federal. Previously the CISO for Governance, Risk, and Compliance at FEMA, Death recently transitioned to the CISO at ASRC Federal, where he is responsible for the Enterprise Cyber Security Program across a \$4 Billion portfolio. Getting to where he is today required overcoming many challenges, something Death believes he accomplished through mentorship and collaboration. “Throughout my entire career I have been mentored, but many times when I was younger, I did not realize that this was occurring. Nowadays, I recognize the need and actively seek out mentors and the

leadership of people who have done it before,” says Death.

Death is no stranger to mentoring others either, and he actively participates in advisory councils, speaking engagements, and has taught a number of courses. He dedicated one year to the American Council for Technology – Industry Advisory Council’s “Voyagers Program”, a leadership development program for ‘rising stars’ in both government and industry who have a high potential for future advancement, and he currently holds a seat in their Mobility Working Group. Death has provided his mentorship skills for the SANS Cyber Foundations/Aces Online Program and has spent time speaking at highly regarded SANS Institute events. He has also spoken at the AFCEA, Digital Governance Institute, OWASP, and 1105 Media. For Death, any type of collaboration, whether it is amongst

his team or with others in Information Security, is an intrinsic action for personal and professional growth.

Death is regularly expanding his network of peers and leaders, something he strongly values. He comments, “I do not believe in just networking within one’s own sector because there is the idea that a person in a different sector can be doing something that could help you and get you outside of your bubble.” He argues that reaching out across the United States and across sectors correlates to the evolving world that we live in today and specifically to his current position, where he works with many sectors including finance, healthcare, retail, energy, construction, and government.

MAKING BUSINESS CASES

The plentitude of Death’s mentoring and collaboration has allowed him to hold positions where he elevated security through making business cases. Making the case for specific security solutions is often times meaningless to the average person in the organization. Death comments that as a leader in the IT security field you need to be able to show how the security program adds value by protecting the organizations assets

and continuing to keep the business operating.

Death has also learned that in order to function in the Boardroom, it is essential to meet with the business leaders and to market oneself. “I believe that the number one thing to do is marketing by hitting the streets, talking to all departments, and even speaking with customers. This is where you are going to find your advocates.” Death acknowledges that you are not trying to sell cyber security to these people, you are helping them see the value in how security affects business and you are aiding them in making intelligent business decisions.

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THE ROAD AHEAD FOR CISOs

Death believes that the CISO position will be moving towards a heavier emphasis on business responsibilities. In most cases, he says that it will be the duty of the CISO to elevate themselves to this heightened leadership role. Although some CISOs may reap the results during the time they are at an organization, some may never see the results of the work they are doing, and it might only affect future CISOs in their role. “For many organizations, this is going to be a lot of hard work, it may not happen organically and some organizations may not see the importance. However, once they do see the importance, a switch will turn on and the CISO will easily make this transition,” says Death.