BUILDING AN INFORMATION SECURITY AWARENESS PROGRAM BY MARK B. DESMAN
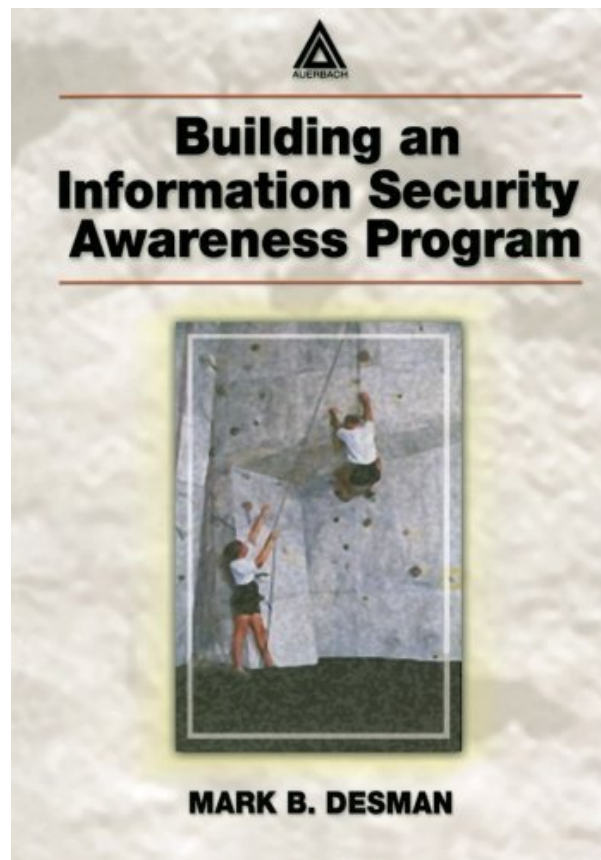
Building an Information Security Awareness Program

MARK B. DESMAN

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In his latest book, a pre-eminent information security pundit confessed that he was wrong about the solutions to the problem of information security. It's not technology that's the solution, but the human factor-people. But even infosec policies and procedures are insufficient if employees don't know about them, or why they're important, or what can happen to them if they ignore them. The key, of course, is continuous awareness of the problems and the solutions.

Building an Information Security Awareness Program addresses these concerns. A reference and self-study guide, it goes step-by-step through the methodology for developing, distributing, and monitoring an information security awareness program. It includes detailed instructions on determining what media to use and where to locate it, and it describes how to efficiently use outside sources to optimize the output of a small staff. The author stresses the importance of security and the entire organizations' role and responsibility in protecting it. He presents the material in a fashion that makes it easy for nontechnical staff members to grasp the concepts. These attributes render Building an Information Security Awareness Program an immensely valuable reference in the arsenal of the IS professional.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

Most helpful customer reviews

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.
Disappointing read
By Dr. G. Hinson
Having read the cover blurb about this being a cookbook with step-by-step methods and techniques, I bought "Building an Information Security Awareness Program" with high hopes of learning some practical tips for planning and running a security awareness program. Unfortunately, I struggled to find anything of much value.
There are two main reasons that led me to this conclusion. Firstly, the book focuses primarily on information security rather than security awareness per se. The book is written in the sense of giving sage advice to

someone who has recently joined a fairly large company as Chief Information Security Officer rather than Head of Information Security Awareness. A selection of awareness topics are covered, of course, but it is almost as if these aspects have been added on to the main text about information security. One could argue that somebody new to security awareness might not have the grounding in information security and would need to learn more. The coverage in this book is so unstructured and incomplete, however, that it cannot honestly be recommended as a primer either on information security or on security awareness.

Secondly, and by far the biggest barrier to understanding, is the author's consistently bad writing style. Others have described it as "chatty" - excessively wordy and turgid are closer to the truth. Grammatical and punctuation errors do not help. There are sentences on virtually every page that are so convoluted and obscure that all meaning is lost. This is somewhat ironic given the author's insistence that security awareness materials should be written "for 9th graders". The text often meanders into side topics and then loses its way in the detail. A good editor should have pruned these asides `back to the green wood' in order to maintain the flow of the text. Indeed, it is entirely possible that the editor's red pen has already trimmed out a lot of dead branches, but I kept wishing that more savage cuts had been made. The author clearly has strong feelings about certain pet hates. He attacks concepts such as organizational culture, for example, in cynical language ("idealistic mumbo jumbo" is one choice phrase!). Highly biased coverage of statistics in Chapter 18, probably the worst chapter in the book, completely undermines the author's otherwise good points about the need to measure an awareness program.

That said, the book will remain on my bookshelf because of the useful chapter summaries and a handful of good ideas that surfaced from the text. I liked the suggestion to interview managers to explore their security priorities, thereby drawing them into the awareness program. Gathering and sifting through pre-existing security awareness materials seems well worthwhile. As an ex-auditor, I appreciated the emphasis on working with the auditors to address their information security concerns. So there we are, the book's best parts covered in three short sentences. If only the author had been so succinct.

4 of 8 people found the following review helpful.
Excellent info, tone too chatty
By K. Wakefield
This book has great information for the person who has been tasked with creating an Information Security Awareness program at a business which has never previously had one. Good tips on developing Info Security policies, and getting management backing for the policies and awareness program. It would be a great tool for someone wanting to learn how to assess the corporate culture of a new job, if you're not a people person. The only quibble I have is the tone is way too chatty and informal, which gets annoying at times. But well worth the read!

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
My Friend is the Author
By Rebecca J. Pacey
I bought this because a friend wrote it. I am going to send it to him and have him sign it.

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