



CAN'T AFFORD A CISO? THERE ARE GOOD ALTERNATIVES

Chief Information Security Officer is a title often in the news, especially when there is a successful cyberattack. But what does a CISO do, and do you need one?

A CISO is a specialized position requiring deep technical skills, an understanding of business, and a willingness to take on a challenging role and often be in the spotlight, especially when things go wrong.

A good CISO doesn't come cheap. Major companies need a CISO and can afford one. But what do small and medium size companies do?

A possible answer is a virtual CISO also called a shared CISO or CISO as a Service.

These titles are similar in that the CISO is not a full-time employee of one company. For simplicity we will use the term vCISO.

But what does a CISO do? A CISO virtual or otherwise is similar to other C-level executives in that they set the strategy, determine weaknesses and risks and create plans to mitigate them. The CISO also is responsible for regulatory compliance. They lay out requirements for new or upgraded equipment and education and participate in C-level meetings with other departments and possibly the CEO to understand company strategy and their role in achieving it. They educate other C-level executives on the importance of cyber security to the success and continuance of the firm. There may be other tasks depending upon the company, but these are common across companies.

The vCISO differs from a full time CISO in that they share their time and expertise across multiple companies. How many companies depends upon the size of the companies, the amount of IT infrastructure and the information being held.

The benefit of a vCISO to small and mid-size companies is it makes available skill sets and experience typically beyond their reach.

If you hire a vCISO they should evaluate the IT infrastructure and all hardware and software used by the company to determine risks and security holes. Everyone from the top down should be evaluated for cyber awareness and plans made to provide needed education and desktop exercises.

One essential point to remember is that having a vCISO does not shift cyber responsibility from everyone else to that person. Cybersecurity is still everyone's job from the top on down.

Implementation of the changes identified by the vCISO can be overseen by the CEO or owner and the IT team. Of course, the vCISO will return periodically to check on progress and update strategy and plans.

Remember you can outsource tasks, but you cannot outsource responsibility for protecting information or regulatory compliance.

Want to learn more about cyber security and education, contact AIM Cyber at info@AIMglb.com or call (888) 773-1920.