UK IT SECURITY SALARY SURVEY:

Infosec pros lack formal qualifications

A recent SearchSecurity.co.UK survey sheds light on UK infosec pros' certifications (and the way they relate to their pay), as well as budgets and future career plans.

BY RON CONDON, UK BUREAU CHIEF

UK SECURITY PROFESSIONALS are still largely self-taught and lack formal qualifications, according to a survey of members of SearchSecurity.co.UK. One reason may be that professional certifications do little to boost their earning power.

The snapshot emerges from an online UK IT security survey conducted earlier this year among readers of SearchSecurity.co.UK. The 160 respondents represented a broad cross-section of industry sectors and experience, and included a wide range of roles, from junior newcomers to those with more than 20 years of experience.

More than 80% of those polled had a formal higher academic qualification, 16% had HND or equivalent, 38% were graduates, and 30% had post-graduate qualifications.
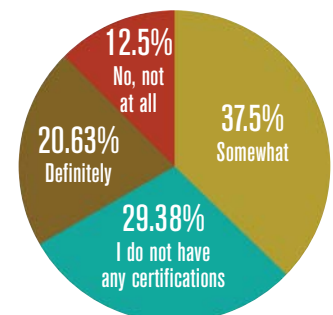
But when asked what security-specific certifications they had, half of them said they had none. Only 38% had any kind of vendor-neutral certification, such as CISSP or CISM, while half said they had at least one vendor-specific certification.

Of those who held a certification of some kind, 29% said it had "definitely" helped their careers, while 53% thought it had helped "somewhat", and 18% believed it had made no difference.

However, the number who saw a financial benefit from having a certification was much lower, with only 16% answering "definitely," 44% saying "somewhat," and 42% saying it made no difference to their pay at all.

This is in marked contrast to the US, where research from the past several years has shown a close link between qualifications and higher pay scales.

Do you feel certification has helped advance your career?

- 12.5% No, not at all
- 37.5% Somewhat
- 29.38% I do not have any certifications
- 20.63% Definitely

TechTarget

While 41% of the respondents said they receive a straight salary for their work, the rest expect an annual bonus on top of their basic pay, although for 15% of them, the bonus for 2010 is expected to be £1000 or less, and most other bonuses will be below £5,000.

Budgets

Around one-third of respondents did not know the size of their IT and security budgets. The largest number (46% of the total) had security budgets under £500,000 and another 8% said their security budget was between £500,000 and £1 million. Just a small handful said their budgets exceeded a million, although 6% said their security budget was zero.

As a proportion of IT budgets, security still remains the poor relation, with 44% of respondents indicating their security programs accounted for less than 10% of total IT spending. Just 13% put the proportion between 10 and 15%; 8% said their security accounted for 15 to 20% of IT; and just 4% said their security budget was higher than 20% of total IT.

Prospects

The security profession was generally viewed in a positive light by survey respondents, with 51% saying they planned to continue in the information security field, and 29% saying they planned to use their experience as a springboard into another area of IT. Only 10% said they planned to move outside the IT/security field altogether.

When asked what factors influenced their choice of job, respondents claimed job satisfaction was the most important factor, followed by salary, job responsibility, location, career advancement and finally, fringe benefits. ›

Ron Condon is UK bureau chief for SearchSecurity.co.uk.

Do you feel certification has helped increase your pay?

10.62% Definitely
28.12% I do not have any certifications
30% No, not at all
31.25% Somewhat