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LEADERSHIP

Chief Information Security Officer A Critical Leadership Role

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“Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.”

~ Sun Tzu, The Art of War ~

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Introduction

Leadership is critical

Ninety-four percent of CxOs in a recent [IBM Survey](#) believe it is probable their companies will experience a significant cybersecurity incident in the next two years.

Businesses are therefore focused on developing effective strategies and governance frameworks to mitigate the risk and reduce the damage of the inevitable cyber security breaches they face.

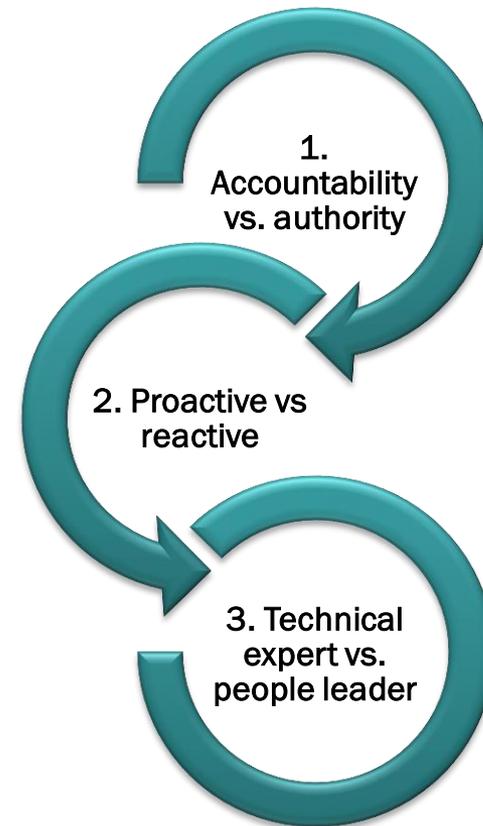
However, to be effective those strategies and governance frameworks need to be supported and executed through great leadership capability at the Chief Information Security Officer or equivalent level.



Challenges faced by information security leaders

Chief Information Security Officers and equivalent roles, along with their leadership teams, are being presented with an increasing range of leadership challenges.

The three main leadership challenges faced by senior information security leaders are as follows:



“Cybersecurity issues are no longer limited to the IT department; instead, they threaten every aspect of the organization and pose a significant threat to ongoing business continuity and reputation.”

~ Securing the C-suite – IBM 2016 ~

Challenge 1

Accountability vs. authority

Information security is now a prominent function. Boards, CEOs and C-suite executives are becoming more acutely aware of the reputational, business and customer risk of data breaches. Notable instances of breaches for example at Target, Sony, US Office of Personnel Management and many other large scale examples has led to a greater focus on the strategic role of the Chief Information Security Officer.

CISOs have to deal with the complexity of the organizational structure of modern companies. They face wide-ranging points of risk exposure that are owned and operated by different parts of the business. CISOs have to know how to respond once breaches have been identified, determine what data has been taken, how critical the data is and the recovery procedures for that data. However, the problems are often in the 'white spaces' of organisations which means it may be unclear whether it is a business, IT or information security accountability.

“The CISO can do everything right and still lose their job.”

[‘The Security Team of 2020,’ Trusted Impact](#)

Challenge 2

Proactive vs. reactive

The growing extent of the threat landscape is well documented. Information security leaders are grappling with increasing dependence on digital and technology innovation which brings with it an ever increasing range of security threats.

Information security leaders are being put under the spotlight to develop and execute strategies and good governance for dealing with the threats that businesses face. To be effective, the strategy and governance processes must encompass prevention, detection and recovery.

However, there is little available time to meet this strategic challenge of aligning to the future needs of the business while they are reacting to the growing list of day-to-day urgent issues.

CISOs need to move from a passive role of simply reporting on problems to a proactive role of influencing their key stakeholders to take action to address identified issues.

"CSOs must be organizationally skilled– in carving out the security budget, in influencing other verticals within the company, and in earning the trust of top executives."

[The Rise of the Chief Security Officer: What It Means for Corporations and Customers](#)

Trusted Advisor



It is critical that information security leaders shift their role from traditional gatekeeper to being a trusted advisor for their key stakeholders

Challenge 3

Technical expert vs. leader

Most senior information security leaders have come from a strong technical background. They have typically built their reputation on being great technical problem solvers. Often, the reward for being a great subject matter expert is to be thrust into leadership. But there is usually little support or development for the transition from solving technical problems to producing results through people.

The CISO's role is analogous to a physician and patient. They cannot force you to do anything but they can nudge you to take action and co-ordinate a team of resources to help you take those actions.

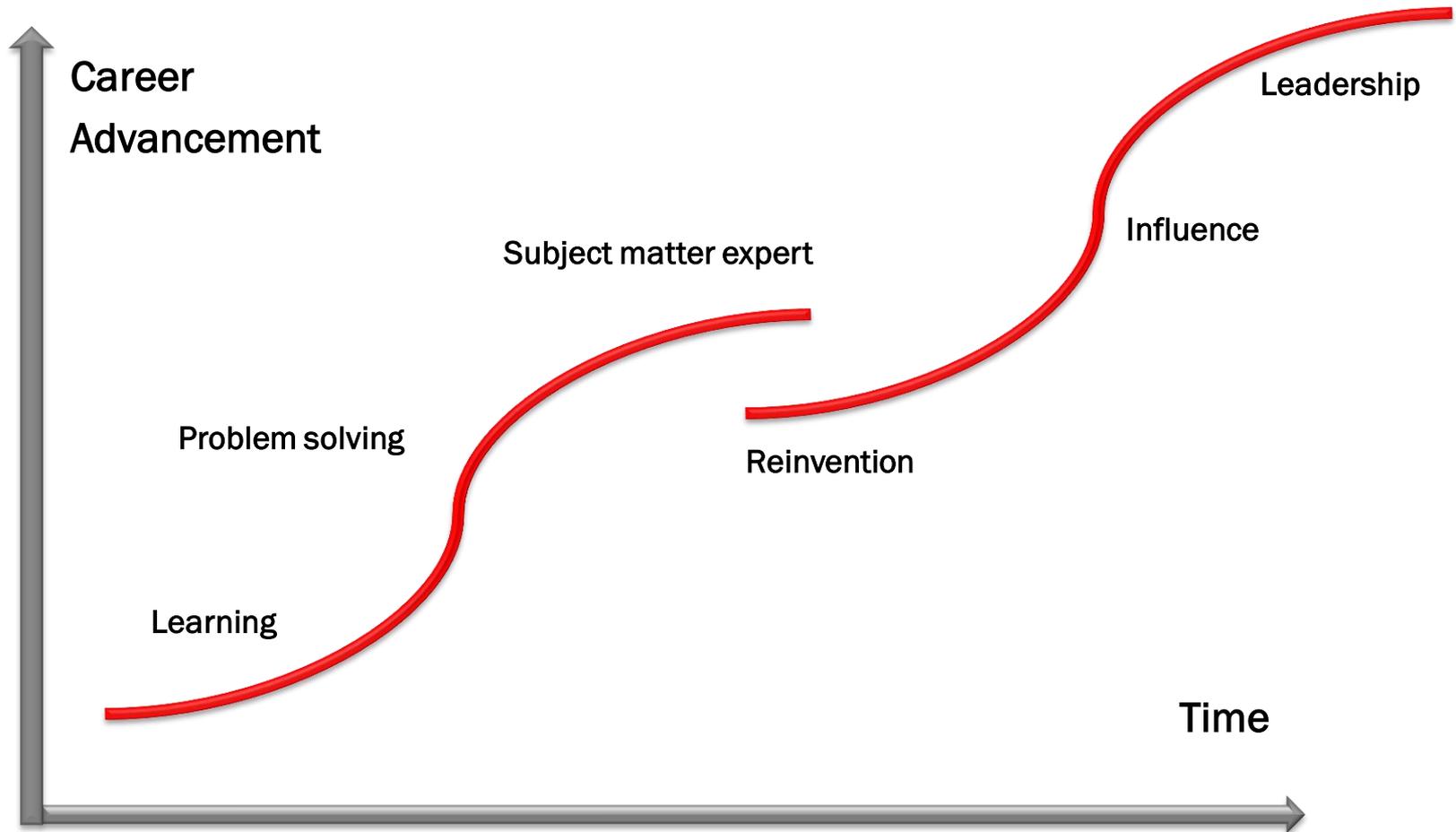
This paper delivers a model for building the influence of information security leaders with their key stakeholders. It will support them to deliver business results beyond what they thought was possible. By implementing some practical steps for transforming their leadership, they will also build their own brand as game-changing leaders.

“It’s leadership. It’s setting the right direction. There are a lot of people who have grown up in the tech world, and their instinctive reaction is “What’s the tool I need to buy?” when, in fact, managing human behavior is the ultimate objective.”

[Bob West, Lessons from the Target Breach](#)

Challenge 3

Technical expert vs. leader

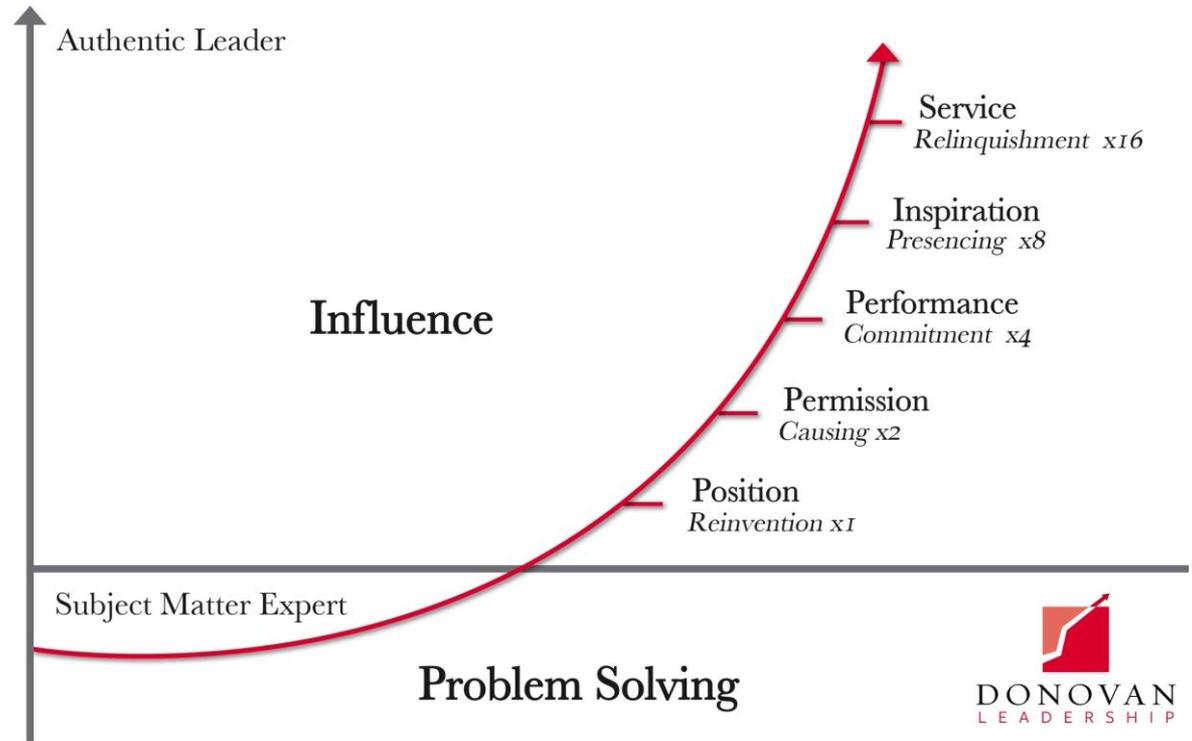


Moving up the influence curve

Information security leaders need to move up the influence curve to meet the challenge of being a trusted advisor to their key stakeholders.

We have found that leaders are able to multiply their leadership potential as they move up the influence curve.

See following pages for an explanation of the stages.



Stages of influence

Stage	Focus	Leadership Potential
Service	The focus at the service stage of the influence curve is on relinquishment	X 16
Inspiration	Leaders at the inspiration stage of the influence curve are able to make the future vision so present for others that it is clear what action needs to be taken today	X 8
Performance	Leaders at the performance stage on the influence curve are able to make big commitments and elicit big commitments from those around them	X 4
Permission	Leaders at the permission stage of the influence curve are focused on causing great leaders around them	X 2
Position	At the position stage on the influence curve the focus is on reinvention of your key strengths	X 1

Stages of influence

Position

At the position stage on the influence curve, the focus is on **reinvention**.

You have the title and the business card, but now it is time to reinvent your key strength(s). Your strength is what got you here and it will be what takes you to the next level.

For CISOs, this is often about reinventing your inherent problem solving strength. For example, by shifting from solving technical problems to solving strategic issues.

[Zenger Folkman research](#) concludes, "...that great leaders are not defined by the absence of weakness, but rather by the presence of clear strengths."

In their Extraordinary Leader study, they found that leaders with 1-3 key strengths were placed in the 60-80th percentile in their leadership effectiveness.

Leaders at this level accelerate their leadership potential x 1

Stages of influence

Permission

Leaders at the permission stage of the influence curve are focused on **causing** great leaders around them.

The breakthrough required at this stage is the ability to cause results through others. This ability to **cause** results is distinct from being a great subject matter expert and a prodigious 'doer.'

“Leaders don’t create followers; they create more leaders.”

- Tom Peters -

Most of us have had the experience that someone believed in us more than we believed in ourselves at that stage of our career. It is that ability which doubles your leadership potential and produces bigger results.

CISOs who surround themselves with a great team of technical problem solvers and give them permission to be great leaders accelerate their leadership potential x 2.

Stages of influence

Performance

Leaders at the performance stage on the influence curve are able to make big **commitments** and elicit big commitments from those around them.

A characteristic of game-changing leaders is the ability to commit to achieving stretch results. They are able to move outside their comfort zone to achieve their objectives.

We have all had the experience of taking on a big commitment, whether it be moving countries, taking on a big new role, delivering a stretch result etc.

In the process you find a new level in your leadership that you did not realise you had.

CISOs who can make game-changing commitments to stretch objectives and elicit big commitments from others build their leadership potential x 4.

Stages of influence

Inspiration

Leaders at the **performance** stage of the influence curve are able to make the future vision so **present** for others that it is clear what action needs to be taken today.

Leaders at this stage have the ability to articulate a vision and bring others along on the journey so that they also own the vision.

Recent [research](#) by Culture Amp supports the view that employees want leaders who can ‘provide a vision that people believe in and are motivated by.’

When Martin Luther King delivered his “I have a dream” speech, he was able to make his vision for equality so present that people could see the action that they needed to take.

Leaders at this level accelerate their leadership potential x 8

Stages of influence

Service

The focus at the service stage of the influence curve is on **relinquishment**.

Leaders at this level have become aware that the vision is bigger than them and the focus is on relinquishing control to others.

They are able to confidently relinquish control because they have already coached, supported and empowered others around them to be great leaders.

Relinquishing control enables them to achieve two things. The first is to free themselves up to move on to the next game-changing vision. Second, they are able to empower others to extend their vision beyond what they originally envisaged.

Leaders at this level accelerate their leadership potential x 16

What's next?

If you are ready to build your influence and deliver game-changing results then the Donovan Leadership coaching program for information security leaders is for you.

The six month program covers the following core curriculum:

- Setting a stretch result to be achieved in six months
- Redefining your key strength
- Causing results through your team
- Influencing your key stakeholders
- Creating opportunities to forward your objectives
- Communicating in a way that forwards action
- Honouring your commitments and holding others to account
- Acknowledging your accomplishments and creating what's next for you



About Donovan Leadership

Brian Donovan is the founder of Donovan Leadership. He is a dedicated advocate of powerful and practical leadership. His commitment to the field is informed by 40 years' experience in the technology sector, as a senior executive in Telstra and as CEO of the IT Skills Hub. He is an executive coach, facilitator and speaker.

He has helped countless technology leaders transform from technical experts into leaders who succeed. He is able to draw from his practical experience as a senior executive to assist his clients to build their influence with their key stakeholders. His programs enable leaders to achieve stretch results and to make the difference they are committed to making.

Donovan Leadership has a [client list](#) that reads like a roll call of Australian industry's best and brightest.



thank you

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