Data sharing practices in Australia are 'appalling': report

It's hard to understand the attitude and level of naivety, says Michael Connory

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Australian companies are failing to conduct formal reviews on the practices of companies they share data with, according to a study by Security in Depth.

The majority (84 per cent) of local companies surveyed for Security in Depth's *2019 State of Cyber Security* research said they had not completed these reviews, which was described in the latest report as "appalling."

More than half (59 per cent) of all companies surveyed for the report said they had experienced a third-party breach during the last 12 months, a three per cent increase on the previous year.

“With so much at stake, it’s hard to understand the attitude, or the level of naivety, even though our lives are governed by what we do daily in the cyber world," Security In Depth CEO Michael Connory said told *CIO Australia*.

"Australians seem content to remain as bystanders rather than be their own active security force. It’s simply a crazy attitude adopted."

Organisations have increased the number of dedicated IT security staff within departments, with that number increasing by 47 per cent compared to the previous year.

"It has become evident that over the past twelve months, many organisations have elected to have a dedicated department focusing on cyber security," the report said.

One of the greatest challenges of CIOs and CISOs is the ability to implement a strategic framework that can be executed effectively. According to the report, 88 per cent of CISOs focus on day-to-day tactical requirements of the business rather than being able to implement a strategic vision across the organisation.

Securing an organisation’s infrastructure has become one of the more stressful jobs with 92 per cent of CISOs saying they are not able to switch off work and 20 per cent stating to suffer burnouts. Also, 71 per cent claimed they do not have the people to support the job that is required.


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Meanwhile, less than 30 per cent of respondents said their network is sufficiently secure and 11 per cent claiming it to be highly secure.

Security in Depth believes one in four companies conduct penetration testing. More than 35 per cent of organisations have reported they do not provide cyber security awareness training, all other organisations provide some kind of training.

"More organisations are conducting cyber awareness training this year than last year. We have seen a significant improvement in the number of organisations who have adopted with an overall jump by approximately 10 per cent - which translates to an estimated extra 3500 organisations recognising the need for training and implementing a training program," the report said.

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There has also been an increase in the number of organisations with a dedicated department focusing solely on cyber security which has grown 1400 per cent in the past 12 months.

One of the findings in the report is the reasons behind cyber attacks. The report focus in five categories: financial; espionage; fun; grudge and other. The government sector had the highest rate of cyber attacks motivated by espionage and the least for financial benefit. The education, technology, manufacturing, professional services, retail, health, and the finance sectors all had high rates of financially-motivated cyber attacks. Both health and education suffered cyber attacks doen for "fun", the report said.

70%

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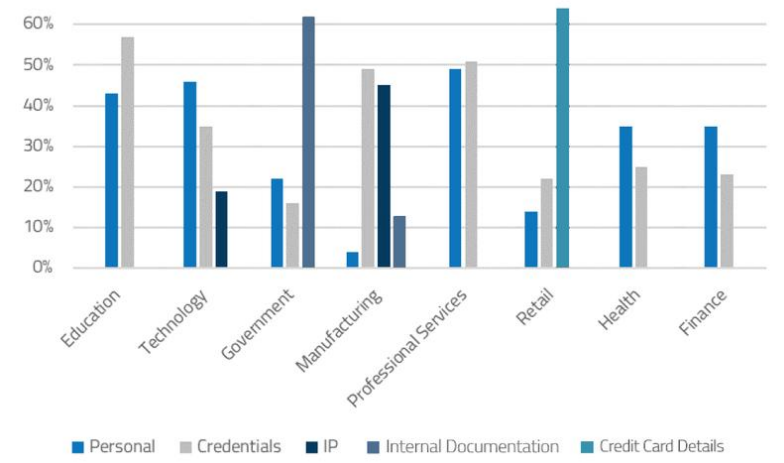

Credit: Security in Depth

2019 State of Cyber Security, Security in Depth

The report found that 1.5 per cent of organisations made no investment in cyber in the past 12 months.

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"This is also reflected in a significant spike in organisations investing up to 10 per cent of their annual IT budget in cyber from 53 per cent to almost 75 per cent," the report said.

"The challenge we see across the spectrum is how organisations are allocating funds – Security In Depth is finding more often than not, the decision has become more tactical to try and cover specific challenges requiring immediate attention, an example being requests for security information and maturity from the supply chain, and organisations implementing activities like training, penetration testing or improved technology such as malware solutions. Security in Depth would like to see organisations initially improve the strategic component of cyber security and start with a solid governance framework," the report said.

The report noted that about 40 per cent of organisations still have cyber security falling under the banner of IT, and 40 per cent reporting to either the CEO, CFO or directly to the board in certain circumstances.

"We infer, many of the challenges with data breaches and in particular human error, relate to a reporting line to IT. The challenge here is, IT has no real control or impact on people across the organisation and as such, the ability to change individual behaviour, is almost non-existent. Those organisations who have removed cyber risk from their IT operations, have seen significant changes in user behaviour resulting in a more mature, resilient and risk averse organisation," the report said.

A total of 1894 organisations employing between 20 and over 50,000 people were surveyed. The organisations are spread across all 14 major industries with all Australian finance organisations contributing to 27 per cent of all respondents, technology organisations 17 per cent and health organisations 16 per cent.

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