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Gaining Buy-In for Security-A Short Essay

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Recently I was asked an important question:

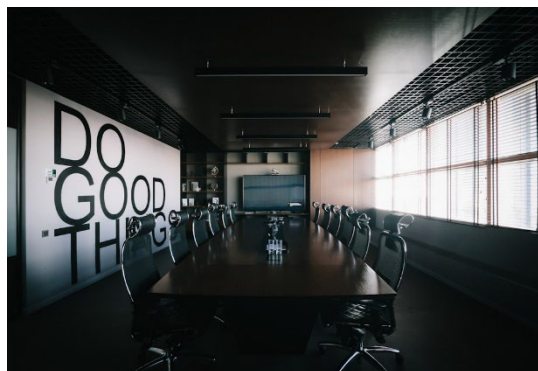
“How do you get buy-in for security management from the C-suite?”

Well, it just so happened that I recently spent a couple of days consulting with senior executives of a \$650M Christian organization gaining their buy-in for security and crisis management. From this most recent experience, as well as other times I have consulted organization executives on the need to embrace and develop organizational security management, here are some practical ideas and guidance for gaining executive buy-in for security in Christian organizations.



What is Executive Buy-In?

Executive buy-in is defined as the agreement of organizational executives towards the formal and informal support for investing time, focus, and resources into a project or program. This kind of engagement is essential to launch a new program with intra-organizational support as well as a necessary prerequisite to take an existing project or program a level of greater impact and influence on the organization toward the successful completion of its mission and fulfillment of its vision.



How Do We Develop Executive Buy-In for Security?

Truthfully, there is no one way to gain executive buy-in for security in any organization. What I can tell you is that gaining buy-in is a process that requires both patience and understanding. Understanding what executives believe to be necessary to ensure mission fulfillment for the organization cannot be overstated. In other

words, if you want executive support, avoid making your proposal simply about what you want or think is best. It is incumbent upon you to understand the strategic focus of executives. Why? Because rooted inside the strategic focus of executives are their priorities and goals of the organization. Executives see their priorities and goals as critical toward successfully fulfilling the mission and vision of the organization. Your desire for security management needs to **fit within** those priorities and goals. It is also important to mention that executives see those priorities and goals as necessary for capitalizing on the opportunities that arise in the pursuit of mission success. Executives need to see that the practice of security will help them capitalize on new opportunities that God brings to the organization. This, in turn, makes security essential to the success of the organization. Armed with this understanding, tailor your proposals to reflect and align with the interests of executives. With this foundation, here are several additional axioms for how to pursue executive buy-in for security:

- **Make security essential.** You get buy-in by letting executives see that the work of security is essential to fulfillment of the organization’s mission.

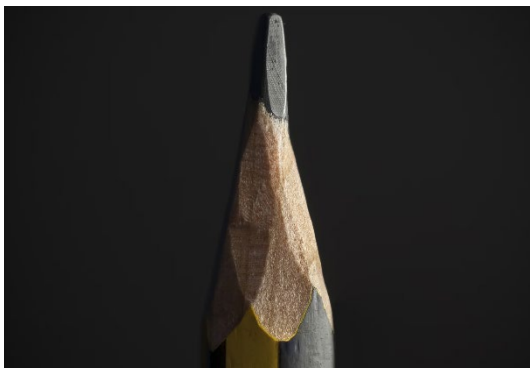
- **Seek a champion for advocacy.** Pray for and seek out an individual in leadership who will champion your cause to executives. Remember endorsement is developed through relationships. You need to be proactive to build an authentic relationship with your champion/advocate for them to support what you want to accomplish. Remember, they not only need to believe in your ideas, they also have to believe in you.



- **Tie security to mission fulfillment.** You get buy-in by tying the work of security to the mission and vision of the organization, making security an essential part of mission fulfillment for the executive team.
- **Security is an essential part of loving and caring well.** You get buy-in when executives realize that security management is an active part of loving and caring for team members.
- **Security empowers effectiveness.** You get buy-in when executives see that their team members are more effective with security management than without it.
- **Security helps team members thrive.** You get buy-in when executives see that security management helps their people thrive on the field, extending their service life, and building effectiveness into mission fulfillment.

(NOTE: Related to the two previous points, a good friend once told me that “proper security programs enable personal and organizational resilience in the face of adversity. Depending on your organizational risk tolerance they can also permit you to operate in areas others deem too dangerous or difficult to serve in. Wise words!)

- **An ounce of prevention...** You get buy-in when the executives see the financial expenditure for security builds the organization’s reputation more effectively than financial expenditures attempting to resolve or clean up the consequences of “predictable tragedies” that might otherwise have been avoided with prudence.



- **Remember the bottom line.** You get buy in when executives see that the use of security impacts the bottom line as well as their accountability before God for their decisions. To put it another way, it helps for executives to see that God, in His sovereignty, can use litigation to prune the organization and its executives because negligence, which is akin to poor stewardship of God’s blessings.

- **Aim small; miss small.** When tailoring any presentation, focus on the essentials of security management and why they are important vs providing a large, oversized justification of “why” security is necessary. In other words, do not convince them with the weight of your argument for security, convince them with the accuracy of the justification for security management that clearly outlines the benefits, Return on investment, and alignment with organizational goals toward mission fulfillment.



Allow me to provide some final thoughts toward your success. First, play the long game of Luke 2:52. For 18 years, from age twelve to age thirty, Jesus prepared for His ministry as He grew in “wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man.” You need to do the same. As a security leader in your organization, fulfill your role to your utmost ability. Be a student of security as well as a practitioner. Keep learning. Study the Word of God and communicate biblical principles that

empower security practice. As you remain diligent, through your experience you will develop wisdom. That wisdom will lead to opportunities for you to develop stature (credibility) as both a security practitioner as well as a follower of Jesus. The stature the Lord grants will naturally lead to favor. Favor is experienced through the opportunities that God provides you serve your organization as you love and lead others to better see and understand the strategic role security plays in the life of the organization.

Finally, be patient. I once served as the security director of a denominational mission agency that was 160+ years old. In those 160 years they had only ten organizational presidents by the time I arrived. While the organization was steadfast, change could be quite slow. PATIENCE was going to be a virtue if I wanted to see positive development in the practice of security during my tenure. You need to do the same. Be patient. Love your people. Do not underestimate the correlation between change and presence. That is to say, change will take time and will require your steadfast presence in the organization to lead the change. Practice 2 Timothy 2:15 as you do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed because you have rightly handled the word of truth and its application to security management--for God’s glory and the good of your organization!

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Scott is a former Army Ranger and seminary-trained security practitioner who combines sound theological perspective with security best practices for Christian churches, mission agencies, and humanitarian organizations.

Scott lives in the Midwest with his wife and three children.

