

Incorporating security into IT transformation



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An intelligence-driven and mission-focused security approach is critical to protecting a modern infrastructure

THE MODERNIZING

Government Technology Act will give agencies the opportunity to rethink their IT infrastructures. Because their existing tools might not have been developed for today's ever-evolving cybersecurity landscape, agencies should take advantage of the opportunity to modernize their security while they're modernizing their infrastructure.

Agencies should be adopting the same long-term mindset for security tools and strategies that they are using for their infrastructures, and they should develop a roadmap that incorporates both.

Identity, data and productivity

As one element of that transformation, agencies should implement a secure identity and access management system that will improve productivity by seamlessly granting employees the access they need to do their jobs. A good system does more than simply use the right two-factor authentication or other approved tool. It involves analyzing all the information we know about an individual to authenticate his or her identity to then provide that employee with the correct level of access. Agencies should do all this in a robust, secure way that is transparent to the user.

Similarly, agencies have an opportunity to make data analysts more productive and effective by giving them access to data in a form that is usable and actionable. Regardless of the technology an agency uses, human beings will ultimately be looking at the data and trying to make difficult decisions. The goal is to make it easier for analysts to know what they're

looking at and determine the most important, relevant information on which to base their decisions.

Fortunately, data aggregation and analysis tools are becoming increasingly powerful, aided by artificial intelligence, behavioral analytics and machine learning.

Even with strong security practices and a modern infrastructure, breaches will happen. Agencies need to focus on access control and back that up with active monitoring of essential services. It's no longer enough to build high walls and put

good locks on our doors. We need to have security guards walking the halls of our networks as well.

Agencies should ensure that they have a combination of tools that keep people out of the network, tools that track who is allowed on the network and what rights and privileges they have, and tools that help them understand security risks through activities such as continuous monitoring.

Better insight into risks

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have visibility and apply security controls across the entire enterprise, including on-premises and cloud-based resources. Cybersecurity is a dynamic process that involves identifying sensitive IT resources – whether it's a system, database or application – and actively looking for cybersecurity threats to those resources. The Department of Homeland Security's Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation program

has been very successful in aggregating information and providing agencies with a dashboard that gives them valuable insight into the risks they face.

If they can understand the risks, they can take appropriate action, which means CDM is helping agencies begin the journey toward intelligence-driven, modernized security.

With the MGT Act, agencies have a

tremendous opportunity to reshuffle the deck and build a new IT infrastructure. The key is making sure to incorporate security from the start because changing the infrastructure will require agencies to change the processes and tools they're using to monitor and protect it. ■

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