SECURITY AWARENESS PROGRAM CASE STUDY

Industry: Consulting & Certification

Company size: 12,000+

Number of countries: 44+

When did you implement your security awareness program?

This is still a new program, we launched only a few months ago.

Can you describe your launch process? What did you do to bring attention to your efforts?

It was really important for us to get our president involved, to show that security was important to everyone within the company, from the top down. So the initial launch video was hugely helpful. It included not only an introduction to the key tenants of the program and the materials that users could expect to see in coming months, but also a personal message from the president. We found this to be really helpful in our global offices, especially in Asia where they need to see buy-in from the top down. This video was integral for gaining initial support.

What sorts of materials and content are you including in your program?

We have a monthly newsletter, which includes a global security team update. We've received feedback from our European and North American offices that they find this useful. We haven't gotten much feedback from our Asian offices concerning the newsletter. Also a monthly elearning course. Posters. Videos.

While we have many elearning modules, we still have some instructor-led trainings, especially for workplace violence and active shooter scenarios. A good balance of the two is important to not burn out employees on any one kind of learning.

Do you have a central learning portal of some sort?

Yes, we have a Sharepoint site where we put all of the resources and post relevant news and updates. We have linked all of our security policies in one place so employees can report incidents easily from the intranet to save them time and energy.

Is any of your training mandatory?

No, the entire program is voluntary. Our employees already have plenty of other training they have to take throughout the year, so we didn't want to overwhelm them with more mandatory stuff. This is why wee didn't go with the internal L&D department for developing the awareness content. Last year, they had only a 46% participation rate in the training they produced. This year, with our non-mandatory program, we had an immediate 80% participation rate.

What have you done to encourage employee participation?

We've focused on security issues from a personal perspective. By doing this, instead of focusing on the corporate, it shows employees the benefits of following security practices.

We've offered prizes for the best security tip that our program taught them. So they email us something they've learned from one of our courses or videos, and we pick the best one, and that person gets a prize. The prize isn't something big, but something with company branding on it. A mug, a t-shirt. Something small and inexpensive.

If managers see people doing security aware things — removing papers from the copy room, not allowing tailgating, locking their workstations, keeping neat desks — they get called out, praised for it, and are rewarded.

Posters are everywhere, in offices around the world, and we ask employees to send photos of the best poster placement — just using their phones. Where's the most creative place a security poster is hung? Or the place that will be seen by the most people? It encourages a friendly sort of competition and gets people to pay more attention to the posters.

We only push out one course a month, and as it's not mandatory we just say "this is something you might be interested in, take a look when you have some time." Since we use short, engaging courses, people are generally interested. They can find five or ten minutes a month to spare to take a course. And if they don't do it this month, that's okay, they might do it next month.

The badge and leaderboard system is useful too. People seem to like that — having a way to see their progress, see where they rank compared to their colleagues, earning little marks of completion along the way.

How do you maintain momentum and keep people interested?

We send out a weekly email from the president — again, showing interest in security from the top down — that talks about security and the importance of being security aware at work.

We definitely believe in the carrot method. There's no stick here! We try to remain transparent and inclusive, letting everyone know what's going on, what we hope they will learn, how we want to help them and their families be more secure. We also encourage feedback from our users. This is a safe place for people to share their thoughts. And this helps us make sure we deliver content that they will find engaging and useful, which will continue to drive participation.