"Avalon Cyber is extremely **knowledgeable, professional,** and **flexible.**

This year's tabletop exercise was engaging for all participants, **improved our overall IT security posture and incident response plan,** and positioned us to **address our disaster recovery plan.**"

Introduction

A private university in the Northeast had a new chief information security officer (CISO) join their staff. He recognized that the university needed to test its response capabilities related to cybersecurity incident response and crisis management. The university was seeking an independent partner that could 1) help facilitate the exercise and provide meaningful scenarios to best test the effectiveness of their procedures and plans, 2) analyze the university's ability to coordinate, collaborate, and respond to a significant incident that resulted in a physical or cyber threat, and 3) train their people.

The Challenge

The client wanted to train faculty and staff to be better prepared for possible incidents or emergencies and, at the same time, meet the obligations of incident testing required by their cyber insurance carrier. Avalon Cyber had to create exercises that tested both local and global incidents and engaged their team to ensure effective participation, so they could understand the current strengths and weaknesses of their response efforts.

The Strategy

Avalon approached this challenge by:

- Facilitating a tabletop exercise for the university in which discussion of a scripted scenario was performed in an open, no-fault environment. The exercise was designed to facilitate conceptual understanding, familiarize individuals with their roles and responsibilities, identify strengths and weaknesses, and achieve changes in policies and procedures.

- Examining the capabilities of the university to prepare for, protect from, and respond to the effects of incidents and emergencies.

- Encouraging participation by response team members from multiple departments, including information technology, public safety, operations, legal, and communications.

- Guiding discussion through questions designed to address the exercise's objectives. Each scenario was presented to participants with injection points, which added details or modification to the event to further stimulate discussion.

- Requiring university stakeholders to make strategic decisions related to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of their systems and data, as well as the health and safety of their students, faculty, and staff.

- Identifying, through lessons learned, their strengths and problem areas, as well as the resolution of those problems, so their team could be better prepared to respond to legitimate future events through a more mature program.

- Validating the accuracy of recovery procedures and roles, and any areas where the response plans need to be revised.

- Raising awareness of the security and privacy impacts associated with a significant incident or emergency.

The Results

The tabletop exercises showed both strengths and weaknesses of current plans and exposed areas of possible improvement in processes. This will allow the university to address flaws and update procedures accordingly, ensuring the university will improve its ability to handle an incident more effectively in the future. In addition, the university will be able to demonstrate to leadership, auditors, insurers, and authorities what plans and policies are in place and practiced to help prevent incidents, breaches, and crises.

The exercise was an excellent opportunity for participants to discuss roles, responsibilities, coordination, and decision-making based on plan content. As a result of the exercise, participants left with a heightened awareness of roles, responsibilities, and plan documentation.

To learn more or to schedule a tabletop exercise, contact the experts at Avalon Cyber today.

Turning the Tables on
CYBER BREACHES

How Incident Response Tabletop Exercises Prepare Your Organization For Cyber Threats

AVALONCyber

QUESTIONS?

For more information on any of our services, please contact:

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