



Small Agency Telework Challenges

Small and Micro Agency CISO Council

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Council Chairs



Alen Kirkorian

- Currently at Department of State, as the Lead for the Business Requirements Unit in IRM.
- Formally a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) at the Overseas Private Investment Corp (OPIC), and Deputy CISO at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Actively chairing the Small and Micro Agency community for 8 years.

Dan Jacobs

- Director of Cybersecurity and Cloud Adoption, GSA Centers of Excellence
- Formerly Cloud Security Architect (DOS), SISO at Defense Media Activity, Director of APG Network Enterprise Center, RCERT-Europe Director
- Supporting the SMAC for 5 years

Agenda



- Small and Micro Agency CISO Overview
- Telework Discussions
- Telework Challenges
- Impacts

Introduction



- What is the SMAC?
 - Grass-roots group of security professionals focusing on security issues affecting government agencies/corporations with fewer than 2000 people
 - Consists of 158 different government agencies represented by >200 CIOs, CISOs, and security practitioners
 - Federal heavy (few contractors, few state/local/tribal)
- Primary Goals
 - Collaboration
 - Training and education
 - Influence government-wide decision making

Telework Discussions



- Numerous discussions since early March 2020;
- Various federal guidance:
 - OMB: M-20-16, M-20-23,
 - DHS CISA: TIC 3.0 Interim Guidance

Telework Challenges



- Collaboration Challenges
- PIV Access
- Printing at Home
- Hardware Usage at Home
- Onboard/Offboarding of Staff
- Signatures
- Remote Access and Management
- Vulnerability and Patch Management
- Server Management and Operations
- On-Premise and Remote Technical Support
- Physical Mail

Impacts



Configuration Diversity:

- Diversity in system configurations - networking, ISP, WiFi, GFE, BYOD, etc., makes management, security, and support more challenging.

Contract Impacts:

- Contract scopes and costs impacted by rapid changes in configuration and management requirements.

Staff Burnout:

- Pivoting to telework has been enabled by the IT teams, however they have been pretty pressed.

Questions



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Details for Reference

Collaboration Challenges



Challenges:

- Frustrations due to meetings requiring different tools to meet security and collaboration needs- (e.g. Zoom);
- Massive rise in equipment and bandwidth procurements; and
- No method for rapid security impact review of software, hardware or cloud services, prior to purchases.

Recommendations:

- Develop shared services BPA's for services such as collaboration; and
- Set an interagency standard for collaboration.

PIV Cards



Challenges:

- Agencies using third party federal partners (i.e. Treasury's financial services), are having challenges with PIV cards;
- Some of the small and micro's, they do not have PIV cards - even for access to their desktop systems;
- PIV cards Issuance due to face-to-face requirements .

Recommendations:

- Extend expiration dates on certs;

Printing at Home



Challenges:

- Printing is required at home, however due to the sensitive nature of information (FOIA, Privacy Act, SBU data).

Recommendations:

- New policies and guidance developed by some;
- Issue approved printers and enforce policies for use via GFE mobile devices;
- Plug and play printers were disallowed; and
- Some agencies are also provisioning a level 3 shredder and safe.

Hardware for Use at Home



Challenges:

- Users do not have dual monitors at home for telework;
- Agencies don't use mobile equipment for interns; and
- Shipping of equipment to people's homes is costly.

Recommendations:

- Interns use Windows Azure Desktop as an alternative;
- Leveraging BYOD/C functionality;
- Procure monitors for use at home or letting staff grab equipment from office; and
- Agencies supporting drive up GFE deployment.

Remote Onboarding/Offboarding



Challenges:

- New user onboarding is somewhat challenging; and
- Offboarding of staff leaving the agency has caused challenges - especially with GFE device returns.

Recommendations:

- Use of appointments, and curbside pickups;
- Most are promoting remote provisioning without PIV cards; and
- For off-boarding sending prepaid shipping boxes that can be used to have staff return all of their GFE equipment.

Signatures



Challenges:

- Agencies reported challenges on the fact that internal processes still require wet signatures.

Recommendations:

- Some agencies have been able to leverage commercial digital signatures, but the implementation is not standardized.

Remote Access and Management



Challenges:

- A number of agencies reported challenges with their VPN solutions.

Recommendations:

- Leaning on legacy CITRIX solutions that are out of date needing emergency patches, reconfigured for longer login times, and high bandwidth intensity;
- Leveraging VMWare VDI solutions as an alternative; and
- Split tunneling support to provide user and operational support.

Vulnerability and Patch Management



Challenge:

- Implementation of remote vulnerability assessments in real time, and patch management causes some issues; and
- Network connection bandwidth gets congested.

Recommendations:

- Implement staggered assessment of systems/groups to minimize impacts;
- Implemented over tightly managed VPNs;
- Schedule patching off-hours, sometime with staff onsite; and
- Lean more on the use of CDM and potentially AI/ML.

Server Management and Operations



Challenge:

- Implementation of remote server management and operations by administrators is against most agencies policies.

Recommendations:

- Highly restrictive admin groups or admin PIVs for access;
- Implemented over tightly managed VPNs; and
- Schedule patching off-hours, sometime with staff onsite.

On Premise and Remote Technical Support



Challenge:

- Availability of on premise and remote systems administrators, network engineers, and helpdesk staff.

Recommendations:

- Allow flexibility in contracts for contract staff to work remotely and with flexible hours; and
- Provide additional funding to issue GFE Mobile Phones to contract staff.

Incoming Physical Mail



Challenges:

- Agencies identified challenges with incoming mail, delivered via Postal Service (i.e. agreements, bills, etc.)

Recommendations:

- Develop a protocol for some mail that requires signatures; and
- Have a third-party contractor scan in all mail and email it to the recipient.