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

7/23/2020
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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7/23/2020 Small Agency Telework Challenges
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.
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.