

Calming the Sea Amid Change: Collaborative Testing Keeps Acquisition Smooth

A retailer contracted TrustedSec to conduct due diligence of a company it was set to acquire. Despite having been tested earlier in the year by a different security consulting firm, the child company was found to be rife with critical vulnerabilities that were missed by the initial assessment. Using the collective knowledge of TrustedSec consultants' expertise, the parent company was able to better understand (and remediate) the risk it was inheriting before it caused problems.

Checking the Box

As part of its due diligence, an established food and beverage retailer hired TrustedSec to perform a Program Maturity Assessment and External/Internal Penetration Tests of the company it was set to acquire. The parent company sought to explore the risk and unknown factors it was inheriting from the child company, which would help inform the purchase price.

Earlier in the year, the child company had undergone penetration testing by a different full-service consulting firm and had taken steps to remediate those vulnerabilities. It was expected that TrustedSec's assessment was simply a formality that would check the boxes, but consultants' experience and real-world tactics yielded findings that went undetected (or glossed over) by the previous testing.

Double-Take

During the Program Maturity Assessment, TrustedSec's Advisory Services team found much of

PERSONNEL PROFILE



Engagement Lead (L):

Justin Bollinger,
Senior Security Consultant

Justin uses his focus on Network Access Control and secure network design to discover and exploit weaknesses in an often untouched area of penetration testing, the network infrastructure itself.

Engagement Lead (R):

Stephen Marchewitz,
Director of Practice Development

Stephen has been in the security and risk industry for over 13 years and in IT for over 20 years.

the company's required documentation to be up to date. "Everything was in place," says Stephen Marchewitz, Director of Practice Development. "The company was small but clearly took security seriously and tried to do things by the book."

But when Marchewitz communicated with TrustedSec's Technical Services team, the picture looked quite different. While program assessments involve interviews and documentation, they do not require validation of findings. Technical assessments, on the other hand, put the company's policies to the test by incorporating the techniques used by real attackers.

"This was an eye opener for us because the client was trying to do everything right, but they were not catching what I threw at them during the test," says Senior Security Consultant Justin Bollinger.

Seeing the Big Picture

Many penetration testing companies perform automated scans to find low-hanging vulnerabilities. By contrast, TrustedSec consultants begin their testing covertly and thoroughly document the testing process, establishing a narrative that helps consultants connect dots that might not initially seem related. In this case, Bollinger found email credentials in a public training video for employees, then brute-forced usernames and passwords to access email. The team quickly uncovered financial and daily revenue information, which would be valuable to competitors, as well as employee data, which any attacker would covet.

This 'human' touch not only helped guide TrustedSec straight to the company's vulnerabilities, it also resulted in a detailed, curated report that the client could put to good use.

TrustedSec's approach brings together highly specialized consultants who constantly collaborate to brainstorm new paths forward.

"When a teammate finds a new exploit, now it's my new exploit," Bollinger continues. "When they find out how a system works, they document it for the team. Even if you have one consultant's name on a penetration test, it's never just one consultant who worked on it—you have the collective knowledge of the whole team."

About TrustedSec

TrustedSec is an Information Security consulting team at the forefront of attack simulations with a focus on strategic risk-management. Our goal is to help organizations defend against threats of all kinds and change the security industry for the better.

With a team handpicked not only for expertise and technical skill, but for ethical character and dedication, TrustedSec is committed to increasing the security posture of organizations around the world.