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[00:00:00] This is the Ace Founder Podcast Welcome to the show, Rob. It's an absolute pleasure having you on today Happy to be here. Glad you could come on, man. And, uh, I am really, uh, excited to talk to you today because this is our cybersecurity month, and we've been interviewing a lot of, uh, a couple of cybersecurity experts and, uh, we've been learning, I've been learning so much, uh, uh, about the industry and the how it works and how much threat is out there even in the world of AI even.

[00:00:37] So one of the key things I'm learning is that cybersecurity isn't too much of a priority for most businesses, which is kind of like a surprise for me, but I would have thought the opposite. But, you know, I would love to get your thoughts on that. And, but before we dive into the topic today, I always like to kick off by letting my guest introduce themselves, 'cause you're gonna do a way better job at it than me.

[00:00:57] So could you tell us a little bit more about you and [00:01:00] about the work you do? Yeah, sure. So, uh, my name's Rob Wilkinson. I'm the founder chief executive at Governance Risk and Compliance Hub, uh, trading as GRC Hub. So my background really was sort of falling into cyber, if you like. Mm-hmm. So I studied business studies at, did a, for a gr- degree in, uh, Leeds Beckett or Leeds Poly as many people will know it as.

[00:01:20] And from there did my business studies degree. I met a gentleman at a degree fair and kind of fell into the world of data protection and cybersecurity, and spent kind of seven years- Wow ... in employment in a data protection firm. Uh, sort of climbed the ranks through there with a predominantly a commercial background rather than a technical background.

[00:01:42] I left there last year and set up GRC Hub. So I took a few months out, went traveling in South Africa, had a think about where I want to go and decided I couldn't leave the, uh, the, the industry. It's too, uh, it's too infatuating as a cybersecurity industry. So we set up GRC Hub and we're very much cyber [00:02:00] governance.

[00:02:00] So obviously cyber's a really broad, uh, broad area and we- we're more focused on the governance side and very much getting clients outcomes. So that's what we're all about. So delivering solutions like ISO 27001, PCI DSS, SOC 2, things like that. So people will be familiar with those in the, in the industry.

[00:02:20] Wicked. I love it. I love it. And that's another thing you, you said that, uh, I'm learning. It's quite a broad spectrum of cyber. Yeah. It covers so much and, you know, every, every expert I've talked to actually focuses on one aspect of cybersecurity. So you're on the governance side of things, which is interesting.

[00:02:36] Is it where, uh, do you, speaking of, if we could dive deeper into that, is it like, are you working with clients to help them get com- uh, compliant? Is that the word? To be compliant with the rules and regulations? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, depending on the industry- Right ... and, and what you, what you process from a data perspective, you know, there's certain rules that sit behind specific areas of cybersecurity.

[00:02:59] So for instance, [00:03:00] if you're processing cardholder data, PCI DSS- Mm-hmm ... will apply. Uh, so it's understanding the context behind the business and what the business does. Okay. You know, every business is different And it's understanding that and understanding the-- and taking in some cases a proportionate ap- approach to what they're trying to achieve, understanding their context and how they wanna, how they wanna focus the time as well, so.

[00:03:20] Love it. I'm always curious about the names of the companies of my guests. GCR Hub, how did that come about? GRC Hub. GRC Hub. So yeah, it's re- really, really simple. You know, wanting to do what it says on the tin. You know, if some- if, if, if someone was speaking to us and we say GRC Hub, they'll know straight away that it relates to governance, risk, and compliance.

[00:03:40] So it's, you know, like yourself, it's always interesting to hear the origins of the company name and the, the, the brand and the, the logo and where it's come from. And, uh, somewhat simple, but GRC Hub does what it says on the tin. I love it. Straight to the point, you know. The explanation, uh, uh, that, that helps, that must help with sales [00:04:00] as well.

[00:04:01] Absolutely, yeah. Absolutely. Love it. And, uh, how big is your team at the moment? So we're a small team, Savvy. So we're, we're in first year of business, so we- aw- award-winning concept and business, but the team, we're a team of five, you know, real- really sort of micro business still in our first year. But everyone in the team, none of them's new to the industry.

[00:04:20] You know, we've, we've all worked in data protection, cybersecurity for several years and we, you know, we know the industry well. We know the general pitfalls to expect. So whilst we're a new business, it's very much

knowledge and experience. Love it. And, uh, what kind of clients do you work with? Uh, have you niched down at this moment or are you working across the board?

[00:04:42] Yeah, I mean, I've, I've got a, a background in sort of social housing, so I've, I've worked and got a lot of contacts from, you know, previous, uh, previous times in, in previous organizations and things like that in the data protection space in, in, in, uh, social housing. So, you know, naturally people gravitate towards what they know.

[00:04:58] But equally, we, we're solving [00:05:00] problems for a variety of different industries. You know, the not-for-profit space in particular is quite highly regulated depending on where you focus your time. We do work with some large enterprises as well who, again, highly regulated. But it, it comes back to the point of, you know, the drivers of the industry, the drivers of what they do, and understanding the business context as to whether it's possibly a good client for us.

[00:05:21] We tend not to work with the purely micro businesses because ultimately their proportion at cyber is probably something as small as getting anti-malware on the devices and getting the bare, the bare minimum set up and, uh, as you can appreciate, so. I love that. I love that. That's, that's really cool though.

[00:05:39] So, uh, I'm curious, like when you work with clients, uh, where do you typically find them in terms of the problem you solve and then h- what, how, how do you, where do they end up or what does success look like after you've, uh, worked with them? Yeah. So I think in terms of finding customers, you know, it's, the cybersecurity space is quite difficult to get into [00:06:00] for a lot of people, you know, not, not just from a, you know, new customer base, but even for juniors looking to excel and start their career, and it's a common thing.

[00:06:09] You spend five minutes on LinkedIn and you see the debate between the skills gap and the availability of entry-level roles. So, you know, it's a hard industry to get into and there's a, there's certainly trust barriers in there. So I think having, having been in the industry makes life a lot easier and having the, the trust built up and the contacts that you may have worked with and you've got that understanding.

[00:06:28] But f- from a new business perspective The room can always be larger. You know, you try to meet new people is, is crucial, and finding ways to

do that is, is really important, whether it's attending events or simply just contacting people. Mm. Makes sense. It makes a lot of sense. Like it's a, it's a challenge.

[00:06:45] It, it, I would think with the advent of AI now, there'll be so much business for mostly the cyberspace right now, but will you tell me what, what are your thoughts around that? Is AI something that excites you or is it something that is like, huh, this thing is, uh, not [00:07:00] good for business? I think it's a, it's an evolution, isn't it, ultimately?

[00:07:03] I think, you know, you look, you look back at the technological revolutions that we've seen already. You know, you look at things like Blockbuster and Netflix, you, you know, you failure to do- failure to adapt and you get left behind is, is the position you end up in. So I don't think there's a harm in using AI if it's used in the right way.

[00:07:19] Mm. Uh, and ultimately my, my perception on the use of AI is, you know, you can use it providing you're not using it to make critical decisions. Everything that we use AI for internally is overseen by a human- Oh ... who is able to make critical decisions. You know, treat it as a PA if you like, where you oversee what they do and the decisions they make.

[00:07:39] I love that. I love that a lot. That is very, very... That's a very good way to approach using AI so that, you know, you're only, it, it doesn't override, like you say, the critical decisions, uh, 'cause of leaving that to, uh, AI to handle. Huh. That could be- We're in a dangerous world, aren't we? And we're potentially at risk of AI [00:08:00] talking to AI, and then what is the point, you know?

[00:08:02] So. Do you foresee us ever getting to that point where AI takes over those critical decisions? I've, I've, I've seen it. I've seen it in certain scenarios. Yeah. You know, when it, when it comes to, uh, you know, there's a lot of AI outreach going on at the moment. Mm. You know, if you're looking at the sales side- Mm

[00:08:19] there's a lot of that happening at the moment and, you know, AI trying to sell to AI. I've seen, you know, comical things online of, of that kind of, that kind of space. But, but yeah, I mean, some of the big four, you know, it's, I'm, I'm not mentioning anything that's not in the public domain. You know, there's been some accusations of some of the big four out there using AI in some of their deliverables, uh, and scrutinized for it, most importantly.

[00:08:41] So yeah, it, it's gonna be there and we're gonna have to deal with it. Uh, that, that's so comical. AI selling to AI. Imagine. Yeah. That's it. That's it. So the humans can just sit behind and relax and just let the AI do everything and then, or you just- Yeah ... get a notification, "We [00:09:00] bought this software for you."

[00:09:04] Yeah. It's crazy, isn't it? I mean, the, the, the risk we run, I mean, the, you, you liken it to, I don't know if you've seen the film "I, Robot," but that's- Oh, yeah ... I think when, when, when we start to envelop a, a position where decisions and feelings are involved in, in there, that, that's when we're in a position of risk.

[00:09:19] Uh, you know, we're, the hu- the hu- the human, the, the human population has to retain a degree of control. Yeah. I would think so, man. I would think so. 'Cause of, uh, letting machines just handle everything is just not... I, I, I sometimes I even ask, uh, AI, 'cause I use Gemini, Gemini a lot. Yeah. What happens if we ever get to the point where AI does pretty much everything?

[00:09:40] What happens to humans, you know? If you listen to some of these tech founders, they'll tell you there's always gonna be new jobs AI will create, but AI can still do those new jobs. So I don't know. I don't know. I don't think anybody has the answer to that, to be honest, you know. But anyway, that's interesting times ahead.

[00:09:58] I am super curious though, let, if [00:10:00] I wanna dive deeper into the problem you solve for your clients, like, um- Can we start off with what makes you guys different from your competition out there? Do you have some kind of a process that you, you work with? Yeah. So the customer is at the heart of everything we do- Right

[00:10:15] fundamentally, and we-- I've not got my background on today, which was, which was my hope, but, uh, our, our kinda tagline, and it's, it's written on the wall, you go on the website, it's on the website, is, "We don't just deliver a frameworks, we deliver outcomes that fuel diff- business growth." Mm. And what, what that means to kind of the everyday person is everything we do is done by design to get the client an outcome.

[00:10:36] So irrespective if they have to comply with X, Y, and Z, or they have to govern X, Y, and Z, ultimately, when we focus on that engagement, we want to understand the business context and we want to understand what makes the,

the customer tick. What is the ideal outcome? When we're doing that discovery, what is a success to that customer?

[00:10:55] And ultimately, they might feel that their risk appetite differs from another customer. [00:11:00] Mm. In which case, you know, we would like to take that into consideration, while still ensuring that we are putting the customer at the forefront and acting in the customer's best interest as well, uh, and reducing their risk profile.

[00:11:11] So that's how we differ. You know, we have access to a degree of varying tools that will make life easier, you know, from an automation perspective, and that's the direction that the GRC industry is going at the moment. You know, it's heavily going towards automation and software as a service-based solutions.

[00:11:30] But equally, we recognize that that isn't gonna work for everyone. There's still a space for people not wanting to buy the new and s- swanky tool that's on the market. There's, there's a space for someone who just wants to pick up the phone and deal with a, a consultant who can give them advice there and then for their context, rather than try to shoehorn them down, "This is your policy, this is your template," type approach.

[00:11:52] So, you know, we're very much consultative, and we're purely focused on getting the customer the outcomes. I love that. And then speaking of outcomes [00:12:00] now, what can the clients expect when they work with you? Yeah, no, absolutely. So great question, and I think one of the things we're very proud of at GRC Hub is the, the amount of case studies and the amount of referrals we've got purely in our first kinda six, seven months of operation.

[00:12:15] And people like to see numbers and figures and savings and everything, so, you know, I, I'll, I'll give you an example that likens to that. So we've, we've recently worked with a large enterprise client who- They've been getting increasing volumes of subject access requests. Mm. So their employees in particular have been submitting subject access requests, and they've had a fairly immature process historically of dealing with these subject access requests.

[00:12:39] So we, we were brought in and we, we kind of overhauled that process, and the, the net result of that overhaul meant that they were saving hundreds of hours simply from two requests- Mm ... through the correct use of searches and the correct use of filtering and the application of new rules and

regulations that are coming into the, the data [00:13:00] protection, uh, environment.

[00:13:01] So yeah, the, that, that's a huge one. Uh, but also things like working with charities on actually unlocking donor engagement and things like that, you know, being able to contact their donors without fear of breaching regulation- Mm ... is huge, uh, to allow them to generate, again, revenue to run the charity. So, you know, there's some real world outcomes with monetary values that have yielded good results from our engagement.

[00:13:27] I love that. And I see why you, uh, emphasized trust when you, uh, were talking earlier, 'cause I was just picturing like you would need to go into their back end and do a lot of stuff there. So people need to really trust you to bring you in and then access all of that stuff. Very, very interesting. Is there any kind of company that you would, you wouldn't work with, or is it- Wouldn't or would?

[00:13:49] Uh, wouldn't. Wouldn't? Yeah. Yeah. So I, I think, uh, if you're getting too, too, too far either end of the scale. Mm-hmm. So, you know, if a one-person band who's [00:14:00] running a- Uh-huh ... a dog walking company, for instance, is, is just not gonna realistically be, be a, a potential customer for us. But, but equally, I think there's a degree of challenge that we have as a first-year business with huge corporations.

[00:14:14] Yeah. You know, huge corporations unfortunately like to work with other huge corporations in most instances, you know? Yeah. Yeah. There's, there's always that to contend with and it's, you know, it's do we have the capacity to service them? Which in most cases we do, but it's, it's that trust piece. And whilst we have won a lot of customers that for where we are, y- we shouldn't really be winning, you know, in a lot of cases, you know, we don't target huge names with, you know, millions of, well, tens of thousands of staff.

[00:14:42] It's just not our, not our market, and we've got to accept that for the moment. Makes sense, especially as you're just starting out. Maybe in a couple years when you guys grow to about 50, 50-man team, you start targeting that kind of- Absolutely ... makes a lot of sense. Rob, we've come to the end of what has been a awesome, [00:15:00] awesome chat.

[00:15:00] You've re- really given us some great insight into, you know, what you guys do about GRC Hub and into cybersecurity. I've really enjoyed this. I always wrap, like to wrap up with, uh, one final tip. If you could, uh, share a tip

with, you know, a founder watching this that might need some GRC compliance, what would the, the one thing you say to them?

[00:15:23] Yeah, I mean, a founder specifically, get in touch, have a chat, see obv- see if we can help you. I mean, ultimately it starts with a conversation. Everything starts with a conversation, and we're, we're very personable over here and very honest and, you know, we'll, we will either be able to help you or we'll be able to signpost you to someone who can.

[00:15:38] And, you know, the cybersecurity industry, whilst it is a broad set skillset, it's quite a close-knit industry and people... Word travels fast and people know one another. So get in touch, pick me up on LinkedIn, Rob Wilkinson, or www.grc-hub.co.uk is our, is our website if you wanna put some time in with one of our team.[00:16:00]

[00:16:00] Love it. And you said something there that is another theme I'm learning. It, it's very, you know, there's a lot of referrals going on in cyber, so if you're not, you know, if you're not the, an expert in this area, you, you always have your network of somebody you could send other people to. So that's very interesting.

[00:16:16] Rob, this has been a wonderful chat. Thank you so much for giving us your time and sharing your wisdom with us. We're gonna leave all those links and everything you, you talked about in the show notes. Once again, thank you for coming on, and I truly appreciate it. Pleasure. Thanks for your time, Zvi.