

Leadership Series - Ryan Sahadeo

[00:00:00] Thank you everyone. And welcome to the breaking into cybersecurity leadership series. Today. We have Ryan and I'm going to butcher his last name. Solid. Let him say that. But in the meantime, this series is geared on hearing the view. Of leaders helping other leaders and how we can grow this talent segment within cybersecurity.

[00:00:26] Because often we have a lot of great individual contributors, but when it comes to leadership we're, we're needing to grow that talent in the industry. So that's the idea behind the series. And Ryan is our first guest. Ryan, tell us a little bit about your. Yeah. Sure. So thank you. I appreciate the time for you to take, to have me out to the segment of, so Ryan Sydel, a cybersecurity professional for the last decade.

[00:00:49] I got my start as a individual contributor slash consultant from the brand shark tank. If everyone's familiar with the show, which I think everyone would be I had pitched back on season three and I didn't get a deal, [00:01:00] unfortunately. And my episode ended up on the cutting room floor. But ever since then, I have been.

[00:01:05] Partner with a lot of shark tank brands. I was one of their cybersecurity SMEs for awhile. And from there, I ended up going back into corporate because I felt as a GRC professional, I could continue to make an impact in that area and being continued to be an individual contributor, but I knew that I was lacking in the tool.

[00:01:24] That makes me more well-rounded. So that's why I ended up back in corporate and ever since I, I forward back into corporate I've had the luxury of kind of leading programs from scratch, building them out from the policies and procedures that work flows all the way through, you know, building up the necessary teams to handle compliance activities and, and the like, so it's been a fun venture ever since, but that's ultimately.

[00:01:45] A short overview by background. Well, that leads perfectly into our first question. As in, why did you become a cybersecurity leader versus staying as an individual contributor? I was always that person that was that [00:02:00] liaison between. Leadership or senior leadership at any company and the ordinary employee.

[00:02:04] That's where I felt that I fit in best. Part of that was due to my experience on shark tank, working directly with some of the brands and the sharks others, where once I left that arena and I went into other industries. I had the luxury and the privilege of working directly with C-suite. So it's, it's where I kind of started my career and I figured I might as well just stay into that and segment into that.

[00:02:27] Okay. And what are some of the critical skills that leaders need, especially in cybersecurity? I think honestly, one of the biggest ones is empathy, right? Like nowadays we have the great resignation and, you know, a lot of, in a lot of individuals, whether they're employees, individual contributors or, or the like are leaving because they feel unappreciated, they feel unheard.

[00:02:48] So empathy is definitely a big quality. I definitely feel that the willingness to listen is another important Quality let's say because you know, you never know where your next idea can come from. And I think out [00:03:00] of all the answers I could probably give, those are two of the biggest ones. Okay.

[00:03:02] We've all often heard that when it comes to leadership that delegation, collaboration and communication are key. How critical would you say those are from a scale of one to five? Five for each of them, honestly delegation is important because not everyone can do everything right. You should never feel like you're the smartest person in the room.

[00:03:24] And you should never feel like, you know, everything, right. Because one, your background differs from someone else. And then to. Your responsibilities due to segregation of duties or at least privilege or whatever cybersecurity concept you want to link to your access that you would have gotten means that you can't do everything right?

[00:03:41] So you have to delegate and you have to know what you're good at and what you're not good at. For example, I'm a DRC. I don't touch any tools. I can't stand looking at SIM tools anymore. You know, that, that's how I got started in the industry. And I just, I don't have the mental bandwidth to do it anymore.

[00:03:55] Right. So if I have a, a younger security analyst on my team, I make sure I pass that [00:04:00] off because that's how they grow. That's how they start learning. Right. And so, you know sorry, could you repeat the other two principal? Gender two would be collaboration and communication. Right? So collaboration and communication.

[00:04:10] Well, as a, as a leader, you definitely have to communicate, right. You have to have that ability to be open. I always like to say that I always have an open door policy where if anyone can come up to me, I'm not going to make them feel small. You know, they can feel free to ask me a question and I can have that dialogue with them because that's how we grow as individuals and, you know, collaboration.

[00:04:27] You have to be part of a full functioning team, right? There's you have the I and the. You have the eye in individual contributor, excuse me, but there's no, I in team, right. Everyone does their part. Everyone is able to contribute to the overall security architecture and therefore everyone contributes to the overall security posture, making the company stronger.

[00:04:45] And speaking of skills that are critically important, how would you rate influenced as one of those critical skills? That's a, actually a very good question. And I think the answer varies. It depends on what type of influence. So as a leader, I like to [00:05:00] influence the team members that are, that are younger than me that are less experienced than me, but that's because I create this collaborative culture.

[00:05:07] In terms of industry like inspiration, well, there's people like yourself who give back to other individuals and other people that are looking to break into the industry. And so therefore, you know, increases your influence and extent, but it increases your personal brand as well. I'd say the answer varies, honestly, speaking.

[00:05:25] It depends on what you're, what you're looking for, but I definitely say that if you're part of a team you want to be able to inspire those around you. And if you're giving back to the industry, you definitely want to be able to provide helpful hints and tips for anyone looking to break in. In regards to networking.

[00:05:41] How critical of a skill do you think that has unwind? I think that's the most underrated skill. Everyone tends to kind of overlook, you know, when, when you get started, whether you're an individual contributor or you're a part of a team, you know, I always like to say that you never know who you can learn from.

[00:05:56] Right. And it goes back to that, that sharing of ideas and that [00:06:00] collaboration you go to an, a. Hand out a few business cards, you know, that's what I'm from New York. That's what people are known to do at networking new brands. Right? You go to socialize you or grab a drink and a

business card and like, oh, here's my 15 minute spiel of what I do for my company.

[00:06:12] But it's through those connections, through those conversations that that person can end up being your coworker someday that person could end up being your co-founder someday. Right. And networking is so important because. Honestly, you never know who you could meet. You know, I was lucky enough in my past experience to have networked with.

[00:06:30] Individuals and undergrad who were way out of my comfort zone. I was a healthcare major pharmacy major, and I made friends with every single department. And that's how I ended up on shark tank. I was friends with the business department and they had a business pitch competition, and they're like, you know what?

[00:06:45] We love how you speak. We love how eloquent you are. And we think you represent the school pretty well. Why don't you go to the casting call and that's. I was like, sure. But I don't, I don't think I'm going to make it, you know, I didn't have a business. It was an idea. And that's how I ended up on shark tank.

[00:06:58] Right. And if I ended up, if I didn't do [00:07:00] that, I would never have gotten into the industry, honestly. Fascinating ciliary. What idea, what advice would you give to future cybersecurity leaders? You have to have the ability to be empathetic and. You have to be able to put your ego aside, focus on the business, need and focus on making sure that you are aligned with.

[00:07:22] Both what's required of the business, but then what's required to grow your specific department. And I say that because, you know, we have, I mentioned earlier that we have the great resignation going on currently, right? Employees and individual contributors. They leave because they don't feel appreciated.

[00:07:38] They don't feel heard. They don't feel like their ideas matter. And when you create a safe culture and a safe environment for people to freely share it. They stay because they feel, you know, incorporated into the, the overall business mindset. And I definitely think that being approachable is definitely another one.

[00:07:57] To feel like anyone can walk up to you and have a [00:08:00] conversation with you is definitely going to lower people's fear of security,

right. And make them more approachable. And that in turn reduces human error. Right.

[00:08:09] Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts, your BA your background and this advice for the future of cybersecurity leaders.