

Breaking into Cybersecurity Leadership Joshua Bregler

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[00:00:23] **Christophe Foulon:** Welcome to another episode of Breaking into Cybersecurity Leadership, where we'll be talking to cybersecurity leaders and how they advanced in their career. Today we have Joshua, who comes from a major consulting firm and will be sharing his experiences in cybersecurity leadership. Joshua, tell us a little bit about yourself and why you got into cybersecurity.

[00:00:52] **Joshua Bregler:** Yeah. I appreciate that, Chris. Thank you. So my name is Joshua Creeger. I work for a major consulting firm. I came here from AWS [00:01:00] where I was supporting the Department of Defense as a security architect. And prior to that as a cyber assessor for Air Force weapons and C2 systems. Got into cyber leadership.

[00:01:09] **Joshua Bregler:** In finding that was where I could make the most impact. Not just in some kind of authority station, but in mentorship and driving change and innovation where I saw that I could do that.

[00:01:25] **Christophe Foulon:** And as you pivoted what made you pivot from being an individual contributor to that leader role, and what was that process?

[00:01:36] **Joshua Bregler:** Honestly, it wasn't much of a process. It was a very natural movement. And it was this transition where I, there was a long time where I was still an individual contributor while being in leadership and moving into those leadership type roles.

[00:01:50] **Joshua Bregler:** And I think that's probably the best way to have gone about it. And it was spurred by the, mostly by me taking those initiatives. And [00:02:00] then my leadership recognizing that I was doing those things without being prompted that I was taking those initiatives in and showing leadership qualities without somebody telling me that I should and which is where that natural progression just came in.

[00:02:14] **Joshua Bregler:** Yeah, that totally

[00:02:15] **Christophe Foulon:** makes sense. And sometimes we find people that pivot from individual contributor to leadership via role change, Others like yourself take on that responsibility and move up. When it comes to delegation, how would you rate yourself on a scale of one to five, your comfort level in that?

[00:02:39] **Joshua Bregler:** Probably a four. I'm very comfortable with allowing folks to take those actions and learn and take them on their own. But letting them know that help is always available so that they're not just driving into mistakes by thinking that they are going to be, there's some gonna be some kind of repercussions if they don't [00:03:00] succeed all on their own.

[00:03:01] **Joshua Bregler:** At the same time, there's always those one or two things. I simply feel better about taking on the task myself. But I think that's always gonna be the case. It's just a matter of there are certain sensitivities where I'm always just gonna want to be able to understand the control and the impact myself.

[00:03:21] **Joshua Bregler:** Yeah.

[00:03:22] **Christophe Foulon:** And with regards to collaboration, how would you rate yourself on that same scale of one to five.

[00:03:29] **Joshua Bregler:** A six maybe. I love breaking out, right? I think one of the smartest things I did at AWS in my time there was reaching out to people that had nothing to do with security. Your inside sales marketing teams integration partners where.

[00:03:44] **Joshua Bregler:** What you found out was that your customer was talking to them about things that they didn't think were cyber relevant. And what you find out is that not only are they cyber relevant, but they were critical to me being able to do these things really successfully. [00:04:00] It's the same customer that's talking to my inside sales team about, an integration that they'd like to find, but they didn't talk to me because they didn't know that was relevant.

[00:04:07] **Joshua Bregler:** So I. Really held onto that idea where that's where I was successful. That's where a lot of my success came from, was talking to these really random folks in my organization that seemingly wouldn't have any

impact, but in, in reality just had this massive impact and bringing them in and really making them part of the project

[00:04:25] **Christophe Foulon:** That's such a great strategy. When it comes to communication, how would you rate yourself on a scale of one to five, and why?

[00:04:35] **Joshua Bregler:** Probably a four. really good. I like to think that I'm really good about overcommunicating even. Just letting everyone know what I'm doing and why I'm doing it and how I'm doing it.

[00:04:44] **Joshua Bregler:** I will say that sometimes I'm not a five because. Sometimes I don't think about the fact that maybe a sales manager doesn't understand some of the terminology I'm using and I don't break it down the right way, maybe. And so there's, there ends up being three or four email exchanges [00:05:00] after that where I've gotta really break down some of that in a way that could have been done right the first time.

[00:05:06] **Joshua Bregler:** But overall I'd like to think that I'm including all the right stakeholders or I try to, anyways, I try to be mindful of the ideal. It's not just the tech folks that need to be understanding. So I really try to press beyond into the business and be respectful of what the impact is of the work I'm doing and communicate that effectively.

[00:05:29] **Joshua Bregler:** And earlier you

[00:05:31] **Christophe Foulon:** mentioned working with different folks across the organization. Sometimes there's a requirement to be able to influence them. How do you rate yourself on the skill or competency of influence and why is that critical to future

[00:05:47] **Joshua Bregler:** leaders? And that's a tough one, right? So I like to think I'm okay.

[00:05:50] **Joshua Bregler:** Maybe a four. Part of the reason I went and went to business school was to be able. Be much better at that. And it's about speaking their language. [00:06:00] And I've gotten, after completing business school, I've gotten much better about understanding what their motivations are and translating what I'm doing to be some kind of value proposition into what they're doing.

[00:06:13] **Joshua Bregler:** And that's where that influence I've seen be really successful is talking about security as business enablement. Not only are we doing these things, and yeah, it makes us more secure, but it makes it so that you can drive your own revenue. It can be a line item on your marketing spreadsheet. It can be something that your sales folks use as a motivation tool, right?

[00:06:38] **Joshua Bregler:** For their customers and translating it over from just being. The cyber guy that wants to have everything super secure to being something that the business uses themselves, drive revenues, bottom lines all these fun business terms. That's the influence, that's where that influence really drives.

[00:06:56] **Joshua Bregler:** And it helps almost everything. It helps your [00:07:00] relationship with the business. It helps your budgets quite frankly. I think it's really important. Understand that translation and take the time to understand what the business motivators are in order to drive that influence.

[00:07:17] **Christophe Foulon:** Absolutely. And I would say a great resource outside of business school would be a book from Robert Shalini Influence And I'm listening to it right now. There's a new and expanded version. And audiobooks 20 hours long. So there's a lot of information in there to unpack.

[00:07:35] **Joshua Bregler:** And he did a follow on called persuasion that I would also really recommend about the idea of not just persuading people but influencing them at a deeper level before they make the.

[00:07:48] **Joshua Bregler:** And it's, it is Robert Gillini is fantastic and certainly recommended as well. Yeah,

[00:07:56] **Christophe Foulon:** that, that's a great book. I'll have to consider that one too. And [00:08:00] something you mentioned earlier was really the concept of networking, of reaching out to different people inside your organization, but also potentially outside your organization.

[00:08:13] **Christophe Foulon:** How critical of a skill would you consider this and why?

[00:08:15] **Joshua Bregler:** The most critical my network outside of my org and, has been just so awesome about having conversations unencumbered by anything at work. They tend to be very honest conversations because it's not

gonna affect my career to have a conversation with a peer, like outside of my profession.

[00:08:37] **Joshua Bregler:** And so I can be really transparent, I can be really honest and so can they, and it's just this really intense sharing of ideas. And I have gained just a tremendous amount from growing that network and having those conversations. Again, probably one of the keys to being a good leader in the cybersecurity industry because the fact is it's grown so [00:09:00] broad that there is no way possible that you can be an expert in every part of this field, even close.

[00:09:08] **Joshua Bregler:** So you have to reach out to the ones who have become that expert in that part of the field that you really need and really drive those relationships home. And even the ones where I am really proficient in, I'll go find somebody that just has a separate, a different idea, a different perspective and pull theirs in and be open minded because those people in your outside network have experiences that you just don't have, and you need to just take whatever you can from it.

[00:09:40] **Christophe Foulon:** Wow. That's such great advice. Any other advice that you would share for future cybersecurity

[00:09:45] **Joshua Bregler:** leaders? I think I'm gonna go back to being open minded and accepting ideas just beyond your perspective beyond cyber. And accepting, really accepting ideas from the [00:10:00] juniors from the folks coming in because they're coming in with fresh eyes.

[00:10:03] **Joshua Bregler:** They're coming in with questions you might not have considered. All the time I get questions that, Hey, have you, when do you think about this? You know what I haven't thought about that. What a perspective. Because you're seeing it with just absolutely clear eyes. It's not shaded by years.

[00:10:20] **Joshua Bregler:** Legacy, anything. So I think being open and flexible with your thoughts and ideas and concepts and being empathetic and compassionate will just take you so far

[00:10:31] **Christophe Foulon:** you touched on this subject and I wanted to pull back on. Would you recommend cybersecurity leaders specialize or generalize?

[00:10:40] **Joshua Bregler:** . See, that's a dangerous question. I think leaders should end up generalizing, but to get to leadership, ultimately you end up specializing. That mid career space is almost from a success standpoint, is almost all because of a specialization.[00:11:00]

[00:11:00] **Joshua Bregler:** So you start out as a generalist and then you specialize to grow in your career. And that's just I have yet to see a generalist just really roll through the line. But then you become a leader and now you're leading again against a. Much more broad perspective of cyber, and so you have to become a generalist again, a different kind of generalist, but you are becoming a generalist again.

[00:11:28] **Joshua Bregler:** And

[00:11:29] **Christophe Foulon:** earlier in the career, earlier in the conversation you mentioned that you went to business school to learn this, but. Did you have any experiences throughout your career where you learned more about becoming a leader outside of

[00:11:47] **Joshua Bregler:** business school? Oh yeah, absolutely. And first off and maybe this is, this I should have mentioned in your advice piece, is find a mentor but not just fun mentor, finding several.

[00:11:58] **Joshua Bregler:** And every [00:12:00] mentor has a different perspective and from, that's based on their own experiences. Those mentors have shown me how to take and be a leader from their perspective. That has been completely invaluable. And that has also driven a lot of it. As a matter of fact, one of those leaders is the one that pushed me to go to business school to develop those skills outside of simply, just that one-on-one conversation.

[00:12:27] **Joshua Bregler:** But, That is probably one of the most valuable things I ever did was cultivating a network of mentors and some of them I are still my mentors to this day. I meet with them, a couple of them weekly, some of them monthly, but like I still just have that conversation with them if for no other reason than to validate my own ideas and thoughts and concepts.

[00:12:51] **Joshua Bregler:** I think that's where you're gonna get a lot of your leadership experience and knowledge from. Wow.

[00:12:57] **Christophe Foulon:** Thank you so much for sharing all that. Was [00:13:00] there any last advice, parting advice that you wanted to share? Before we wrap this up today?

[00:13:06] **Joshua Bregler:** Watch Chris's podcasts.

[00:13:08] **Christophe Foulon:** Wow. Really appreciate that. Joshua. Thank you so much for joining us and have a great rest of your.

[00:13:14] **Joshua Bregler:** Thank you so much.