

Duane Gran - Cybersecurity Leadership Call

[00:00:00] **Christophe Foulon:** Welcome to another episode of breaking into cybersecurity leadership edition. Today, we have Duane Gran who is joining us to share his experiences as a cyber leader. Duane, what made you decide to become a leader versus staying an individual contributor?

[00:00:20] **Duane Gran:** Well, I think that the first off it maybe sort of feel like blushing a little bit at the, at the question.

[00:00:26] Because I think that you know, one of my views about leadership is that somebody doesn't have to give you sort of permission to do it at home. It was sort of a revelation that I felt that I had something to, to sort of contribute. To help out in the community and that I, that I wanted to, and I started to kind of post a little bit more on LinkedIn about some experiences or nuggets lessons learned.

[00:00:51] And it was mostly to collect my own faults, but then I started to see that it resonated with others and that kind of created a sort of a [00:01:00] positive feedback cycle.

[00:01:02] **Christophe Foulon:** And as you grew in your cyber security leadership journey, what were some of the critical skills that helped you along the way?

[00:01:11] **Duane Gran:** Some, probably, I mean, I I'm, I'm a big believer that empathy is the sort of, sort of super power or necessary skill to start to, because if you're, if you have staff who are reporting to you or you're trying to set some, some vision for how a security program operates and interfaces within the business, you can't be successful with it.

[00:01:33] If you're thinking of security, As security for security sake, you, you have to understand the other so that other is the lines of business, why the business exists to make revenue, which helps you to avoid becoming the department of no and security and among your staff understanding what, what motivates them.

[00:01:55] Are we going to burn out our security operations center with Get alert, [00:02:00] fatigue, or are we going to distribute a certain amount of their

workload on interesting threat hunting tasks to keep, you know, to keep engaged. And do we take time to ask, Hey, what, what really kind of motivates you?

[00:02:14] What might need to, you know, engaged in your work and security. So that's where I would always come back. Sort of empathy, trying to see the impact of security strategy as it affects other people. Okay.

[00:02:28] **Christophe Foulon:** Okay. And as you think about your comfort level with delegation, collaboration, and communication, how would you rate yourself and how critical do you think they are?

[00:02:38] **Duane Gran:** Well, I'll admit delegation. I'm, I'm kind of a three. I'm not, I'm not a great delegator and. There's what what I aspire to be with delegation is a sort of person who delegates authority and not necessarily delegates tasks. And so that's been my personal growth effort. Typically I have delegated delegated the [00:03:00] tasks or failed to delegate them.

[00:03:01] And I'm, I'm taking on too much, too much myself. And then I tell people I'm too, I'm too busy to show you how to do this, even though it will pay dividends back. And I think many of us. Have been there. So I'm, I'm a, I'm a recovering do it all. Or like, like many of us, but where I really want to grow. So I'm, I'm, I feel like I'm kind of in the mid, the mid point, I'm not an information hoarder.

[00:03:22] Those are the people who'd be like the ones and twos, but, so that's where that is. So remind me the sec, the second one. Collaboration collaboration. I feel like a more, more on the four side. And because I, I, you know, I believe on this, that if, if you want to go fast, go alone, but if, if you want to go far go together, and that's kind of relates to the delegation.

[00:03:44] Like if you have something that you need to do the quick way to get from point A to point B. Yes, do it yourself. You judge, jury executioner and all that, but you're going to reach, you're going to reach a limits. So I feel, I feel like I'm, I'm a good, I'm a good collaborator, but I've worked with some people who are [00:04:00] awesome collaborators and just have a talent for knowing that some somebody in the room is sort of.

[00:04:05] Quiet, but we'll be an ACE that they kind of are able to draw them out. I'm not there yet, but I recognize the, that kind of difference. And then the last one, I believe communication. Yeah. As long as belonging, I don't totally

you'll stumble up what I'm talking about here. I'm I'm gonna, I'm gonna put my neck out and say that's where.

[00:04:24] I've got my five. Everybody ought to has something that they feel they're very good at, before this for the session I was, I was having a conversation with my kids about writing and I was explaining it or writing. They, they had just finished the end of semester you know, papers that they're doing.

[00:04:38] And they said something you out how she had to get it. You know, five pages and then I explained to them, well, that's good for where you're at right now. You're, you're achieving the quantity of writing and making it cohesive. And I said, really good writing or communication is where. You feel like you could have written 10 pages, but that you [00:05:00] made the five pages really matter.

[00:05:01] And for as an example, a recent summary of some risks and remediations that are, I wrote for the business, what I did when I was done with it, I made it about 20% shorter. That's my signal when I know my communication is is, is, is dialed in when, when I'm making, making it more concise. If it keeps getting longer, I'm probably doing something wrong and I kinda reevaluate.

[00:05:25] So that's, that's the point on written communication, but so that's I've, I've, I've said before in security, I feel like the, the key skills, the two CS curiosity and communication. That you can do, you do those in Europe, you can be awesome in this industry.

[00:05:40] **Christophe Foulon:** I love having the curiosity in there.

[00:05:44] And speaking about curiosity, as, as you're curious, I'm curious how you influenced others and how critical you think that is.

[00:05:54] **Duane Gran:** Well, the, a lot of times, I mean, I'll try to see if I can come up with some specific examples, [00:06:00] but does, but to speak generally of at first, one of the challenges that we have in this, in this field is that we're often in a business with a security team and there's it, sales, marketing, what, you know, what have you that well, they don't report to us.

[00:06:16] They they're, they're not bold and to us, and we have to have conversations with them about. In involving a scheme in the process and we can, we can, but at the end of the day, we've all kind of experienced being told

to kind of walk, take that long, walk off the short pier where where we're not really in their line of line of authority.

[00:06:36] So you have to influence, you have to you know, make an impact. So give an example on this is that I have. Influenced software development teams to, to do more continuous integration and patch management that the, the increase in velocity actually is helpful that the, the number of days, weeks, [00:07:00] months, that something.

[00:07:00] Unpatched increases the anxiety that, that something will go wrong. If you're, if you're regularly doing it, you feel more, more confident. So I used examples about how using source control increases con confidence. So I try to influence in that direction with Business groups. I would talk about doing privacy impact assessments.

[00:07:24] Early on when we would have some proposed procedural change or a kind of software acquisition or project basically pointing out how that it is so much easier to do to bake in privacy and security strategy at the beginning of the. Projects than it is afterwards to sort of say, well, how can we change this to start masking the sensitive information as an example.

[00:07:52] And once they saw that in that inaction they were believers and start searching, championing, doing privacy impact assessments to their, their [00:08:00] other peers of the business. So those are examples of, of influence because I, I don't wield the hammer to just say, ah, you're gonna, you're gonna do it. And most of us.

[00:08:09] Most of us don't have, have quite that, that authority you know, good on you if you've been so blessed, but I say info influences is important. Sit down, you'll get more of it. If you emphasize that your job is to help people to work safely,

[00:08:26] **Christophe Foulon:** love that work safely. Introducing it as a different type of analogy for them to understand.

[00:08:32] As you consider your career, how critical would youth to say networking is as a skill networking with people, not computers to your career and why?

[00:08:43] **Duane Gran:** Well, I have a career change here in the last, the last year. Moving from one company to another. And the honest truth is I had to sort of neglect.

[00:08:51] And neglected the network. A lot of my connections on LinkedIn were years old. And I was kinda, I wasn't exactly sort of cruise control, [00:09:00] but I just, it wasn't, it wasn't nurtured. I learned sort of firsthand how that having that sort of stale was, was difficult in the job search. So it's most, most people I've talked to when I asked them about their experience of getting a job.

[00:09:16] Ah, they're going to explain, they're going to tell you that so-and-so that I knew and made an introduction which I had to add to do the interview. I had to actually bring the goods, but I got I got to the table and had a chance to tell my story. And that is the biggest limiter. Is that going through the applicant tracking system?

[00:09:36] If you're, if but networking, isn't just about, I think I'm getting a new job. So I think, I think it's hugely important if you're in career transition, but networking assaults. Recently I joined an organization called the CSO society where they, it was kind of invite only. I'm kind of a very, very happy about that, but what's really kind of cool is being [00:10:00] in a group of an organization where you can ask, Hey, has anybody had experience with vendor X?

[00:10:06] And and of course, you know, you asked. Five people, you get seven opinions, but they are opinions that are, that are informed versus you know, living in Gartner quadrants and click clickbait search engine optimization answers as you start to search around. So trying to having a network that provides you some candid sounding board professionally, I think it's also hugely impressive.

[00:10:31] **Christophe Foulon:** With that I've been in many, a slack and discord where you get a lot of insightful information that you would not otherwise find on the more public web, thinking about a cyber security individual, listening to this in the future. What advice would you give them? What regards to.

[00:10:50] **Duane Gran:** Well kind of, to what I sort of said at the beginning is nobody has to give you permission to lead.

[00:10:56] It's there isn't a, there isn't a sort of a, you know, [00:11:00] a writing in the sky or sort of bells that, that alarm. And it reminds me of authors that I've spoken with, who would explain that they, they didn't write a book about a subject because they knew. Everything about it. In fact, the process of writing the book illuminated what they, they had to learn to, to finish it.

[00:11:21] So don't, don't wait to be perfect to, to decide that you have something to contribute and that you can sort of speak up in some kind of circumstance to say, I believe that the direction. We should go in my, in our company and our team in this industry at large should be, should be the following. There will be disagreements.

[00:11:44] Let's let them be informed, informed. I, I love smart people who disagree with me and I actively seek, seek them out to, to be sharper. So it doesn't mean and I think the other thing is that, leadership is not necessarily about trying. Accumulate [00:12:00] followers or a sort of ego stroke. The, some of the the topics that I've shared and I'm happy to share if no one ever took notice or sort of, or a pre appreciated it, I still would have benefited from writing and sharing those, those thoughts and I'll panic.

[00:12:17] And to the extent possible, I try to write as if there is no right. Share perspectives as if there's no one listening or say dances, if no one's watching. Yeah, I

[00:12:27] **Christophe Foulon:** love that analogy. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate your time. And for sharing your insights on these topics

[00:12:35] **Duane Gran:** and happy to have the discussion.

[00:12:37] Now, I really enjoyed all the content that you share. Christoph it's had really I've benefited from it. And I thank you to.