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## IT security linked to better career prospects: Survey

by Vanessa Ho

According to a survey conducted by Microsoft Canada and the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance (CATA) of IT professionals, 86 per cent of respondents felt that possessing IT security skills will be critical for career advancement.

"We are starting to see in Canada a lot of people taking security more seriously but also seeing it as a real asset from their perspective to say if I am able to understand and deal with security, I am then able to better understand perhaps a more holistic view of my systems and organizations and look at that as an opportunity to further my career," said Bruce Cowper, senior program manager of security initiative with Microsoft Canada.

Also, 48 per cent of respondents believed that having IT security experience has provided a distinct advantage for promotions or jobs over other candidates who may be similarly qualified, but don't have IT security skills.

322 IT security professionals ranging from CIOs, IT project managers and system auditors participated in the survey. "We wanted different perspectives of what happens in the boardroom and the basement," said Kevin Wennekes, vice-president of research of CATAAlliance.

In terms of the top challenges faced by each of these group, 18 per cent of CIOs listed lack of current best practice knowledge as number one while lack of skilled resources was listed as the top IT security challenge for IT project managers. Data protection (15 per cent) and access management (13 per cent) were other challenges noted by respondents.

Additionally, the survey noted that 68 per cent of respondents spend about 20 per cent of each day addressing IT security challenges.

"In an organization, every single person should be part of the IT security strategy," said Wennekes.

Cowper added that an organization could have a person that is dedicated to security, privacy and compliance but they also need to make sure that at least there is good broad security awareness among the rest of the people in the organization.

As well, the survey took a look at where respondents were going for information on IT security. Colleagues and personal networks were identified as primary resources at 72 per cent and 64 per cent respectively. Other sources of IT security information included IT trade publications and product vendors.

"We really see the community of peers, networks and personal interaction becoming the biggest basis for going for information," said Cowper.

When tapping into these sources, Wennekes added that 60 per cent of respondents had strong satisfaction levels when going after the information they wanted.

Another finding of the report indicated that 60 per cent of respondents felt that Canada could take a global leadership role in IT security. Cowper pointed out that there are a lot of Canadians out there on a worldwide stage representing Canada in the realm of security.

Wennekes added that the reason why respondents felt that Canada could be seen as global leaders is because Canada is seen as a neutral country and could be trusted to deal with sensitive security issues; Canada has a strong, well-educated workforce; and the country's proximity to the United States allows Canada to learn and respond to known problems and exploits that emerge from their neighbors from the south.