Big Kahuna Leadership Survey
The Chief Information Security Officer

Background

Brian Donovan at Donovan Leadership conducts a regular research program known as the Big Kahuna Leadership Survey. He is seeking the views of influential leaders like yourself on leadership challenges that the market faces, with the objective of pooling our collective insights; [the most recent one](#) canvassed the leadership challenges of digital disruption.

In the latest survey, he is seeking views on the leadership capability of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs). The leadership role of CISOs and their teams is rising as cyber security gains more prominence for every business. CISOs are being asked to play a more strategic role and to influence a wide range of stakeholders around them. Some further references on the topic are below.*

The survey is an opportunity to influence the views of businesses on what more could be done to meet the demand for greater leadership capability of CISOs. Participants in the survey will be opinion leaders like yourself with valuable insights on the topic. Respondents will be drawn from a broad cross section of board members, CEOs, C-suite, professional services, vendors and CISOs.

*Further references:

Paper prepared by global recruitment firm, Russell Reynolds, [New Threats, New Leadership Requirements](#) and the [model they have developed](#) for assessing what level of CISO a company needs.

Paper prepared by global recruitment firm, Korn Ferry, [The Rise of the Chief Information Security Officer](#)

Background

We would value your views on the following three questions.

- **How are CISOs currently rated as leaders and why? (Score out of 10 where 10 is exceptional)**
- **What are the key leadership challenges facing CISOs?**
- **What are the best ways to further develop the leadership capability of CISOs?**

The findings and recommendations will be summarised in a white paper and briefing sessions held with survey participants and a wider audience.

We will respect your confidentiality and will not attribute your individual comments in the summary report. You can also opt to be listed as a survey participant in the report or remain anonymous if you would prefer.

Would you be available to participate in a short 30 minute interview to address these questions. Brian is based in Melbourne, Australia so we will work the time zones to suit your diary.

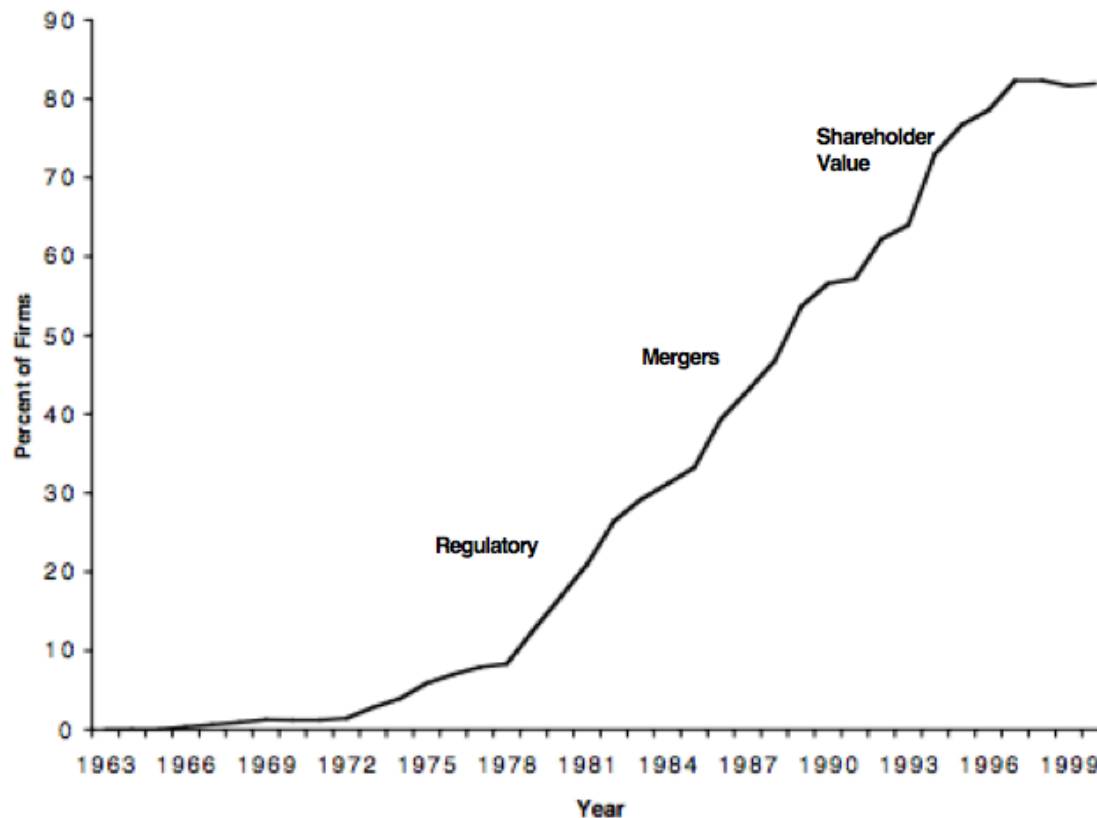[Alternatively, you can take the survey online.](#)

Finance Manager to Chief Financial Officer

Will CISOs evolve like CFOs?

Figure 1. Prevalence of CFO Position, 1963–2000

Note: N = 429. Actual denominator varies with the number of firms present in the sample in a given year.

Source: chicagobooth.edu

Leadership is critical

Russell Reynolds, The CISO Assessment Level Model

What level of CISO do you *need*?

What is the organizational attitude towards cyber risk?	Level 1.0	Level 2.0	Level 3.0	Level 4.0
Cyber seen as an IT problem	✓			
Cyber seen as a broader problem than IT		✓	✓	✓
Cyber risks of third party suppliers evaluated	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cyber a regular topic with the audit/risk committee	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organization open to testing, e.g., phishing and penetration testing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organization open to cyber transformation programs		✓	✓	✓
Innovative approaches encouraged to staff education, e.g., videos		✓	✓	✓
HR engages with CISO, e.g., access controls, "Cyber Insider" and change programs		✓	✓	✓
CISO uses risk metrics to engage business leaders		✓	✓	✓
CISO is consulted widely in the enterprise on cyber issues			✓	✓
CISO trains NEDs in cyber awareness			✓	✓
CISO regularly briefs the main board on cyber and info risk			✓	✓
CISO Involved in confidential situations, e.g., M&A plans				✓

Nature of internal relationships	Transactional → Relational			

Style of interactions	Reactionary → Anticipatory			

Compensation	$	$$	$$$	$$$$

What level do you need your CISO to influence at internally?	IT & Operations Level		Exco & Board Level	

Leadership competencies required to operate at this level				
Results orientation	High	High	High	High
Team leadership	High	High	High	High
Change orientation	Medium	Medium	High	High
Influencing and collaboration	Medium	Medium	High	High
Strategic capability	Low	Medium	Medium	High

1. Accountability vs. authority

> *"The CISO can do everything right and still lose their job."*
>
> 'The Security Team of 2020,' Trusted Impact

2. Proactive vs. reactive

"CSOs must be organizationally skilled– in carving out the security budget, in influencing other verticals within the company, and in earning the trust of top executives."

[The Rise of the Chief Security Officer: What It Means for Corporations and Customers](#)

3. Technical expert vs. leader

"It's leadership. It's setting the right direction. There are a lot of people who have grown up in the tech world, and their instinctive reaction is "What's the tool I need to buy?" when, in fact, managing human behavior is the ultimate objective."

Bob West, Lessons from the Target Breach

Big Kahuna Leadership Survey

- What are the key leadership challenges facing CISOs?

- How are CISOs currently rated as leaders and why? (Score out of 10 where 10 is exceptional)

- What are the best ways to further develop the leadership capability of CISOs?

Take the Big Kahuna Leadership Survey

[Take the Big Kahuna Leadership Survey online now.](#)

For telephone or Skype interview
Contact: Brian Donovan
brian @ donovanleadership dot com