

Title: My Journey in Security: Communication

This will be a series of sharing of my journey in my security career. After thinking it through, I thought I would start off with the topic of communication which is a very key and important aspect of our job. Here it goes.

Personally, I came from a sales background prior to joining the security industry and this helped to set my foundation in communications. I was in the sales line for advertising and building materials. This sales job allowed me to walk into many different types of businesses (including cold sales) and I was able to speak to many people from different walks of life. This career in sales truly helped me polish up my communication skills and I learned to be more confident.

When I started my career in security, I was literally thrown into the security services industry and I started off as a security supervisor. I quickly applied my communication skills which I learned through my sales experience to communicate with my team and customers. This is important as you want to build a relationship with your team to understand what issues that they are facing and how you can help them solve their problems. In return, you will gain their trust and build a stronger relationship and their performance will be better. Mind you, not all the outcomes will be positive, but it helps. I remember vividly the amount of time spent just speaking to the security officers especially when they are absent or have disciplinary issues. This helped me to further hone my communication skills and at the same time I gained a much better understanding of the security operations at my customer's site.

Over the years, as you grow in your career, communications become an even more integral part of your job when you need to communicate to senior leadership and as well as peers but not forget the security officers. Hence you need to be on a continuous journey to learn to be a good communicator and there are a few things that you can do to improve. In the beginning of my security career, I recalled joining a communication training called 'Speechcraft' which was conducted by a Toastmasters Club. Imagine this! I still have the training folder with me! 'Speechcraft' helped me further improve my communication delivery and confidence in presenting. Amongst the topics which I learned was on how to organise your speech and on body language. I would encourage you to join a Toastmasters Club or a similar club whether in your company if you have one or an outside chapter. This move will greatly benefit you.

Reading is another way that you can improve your communication. Just to put it on record. I would admit that I am not a bookworm. However, one book I found very useful was John C. Maxwell's: The 360 Degree Leader. Although it is not a book just focusing on communication but learning about leading or influencing up, across and down; most definitely helped me to see that we need to be able to communicate with people all around us. It doesn't matter whether you are a people manager, individual contributor or a service provider. As a security professional, for example, we need to communicate to the senior leadership on strategy, we need to communicate to our security officers on operations

and we need to communicate to our peers on projects. These are just a few examples which show the importance of 360 degree communication.

Email is also an important form of communication in the work that we do. KISS is a principle I apply to my emails. Keep It Short and Simple. Don't get me wrong. There are times that you may need to write an email to explain in detail. However, if possible, arrange a call or meeting to discuss the matter and then summarise it using the KISS principle. Personally, I like this approach as many times a discussion solves the matter faster than going back and forth through emails. As I share this, I am reminded of what my primary class teacher told me – “use simple words, avoid using bombastic words that you may not understand.” I guess this is like the KISS principle and I have carried this advice with me throughout the years.

Lastly, as cliché as it sounds, practice makes perfect. We need to keep on practicing and polishing up our communications skills. Until now, if there's an important presentation that I need to present, I will prepare the material in advance and practice my delivery until I feel I am ready. This method helps to build confidence and ensure that you are well-prepared to deliver the presentation and answer the questions that may be posed. Also, don't worry about making mistakes but remember the famous quote from Benjamin Franklin: “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail”. Finally, I would like to end with a reminder that no one was born as a good communicator and we need to put in the effort to learn to be a good communicator. This is a lifelong journey and I am still learning.

Thank you for reading. If you have any feedback, questions or comments, please email ASIS Malaysia at asisinternational.malaysia@gmail.com.

Victor Lim Kok Hooi, CBCP

Security leader with 17 years of corporate security and physical security experience in global security risk management and is currently working in a Fortune 500 company.