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Security Barometer: Are You Fairly Compensated?

Created by the Security Executive Council

The Security Executive Council regularly conducts Security Barometer quick polls of its Tier 1 Leader and online communities to take a snapshot of security practitioners' opinions on specific security issues.

The results from this 2012 Security Barometer show an even split on the opinions of the 80+ security practitioners polled. Half of the respondents felt they were fairly compensated and half didn't. Compare this to the results from this same question asked in 2010, where only 25% felt fairly compensated.

Why We Are Not Fairly Compensated

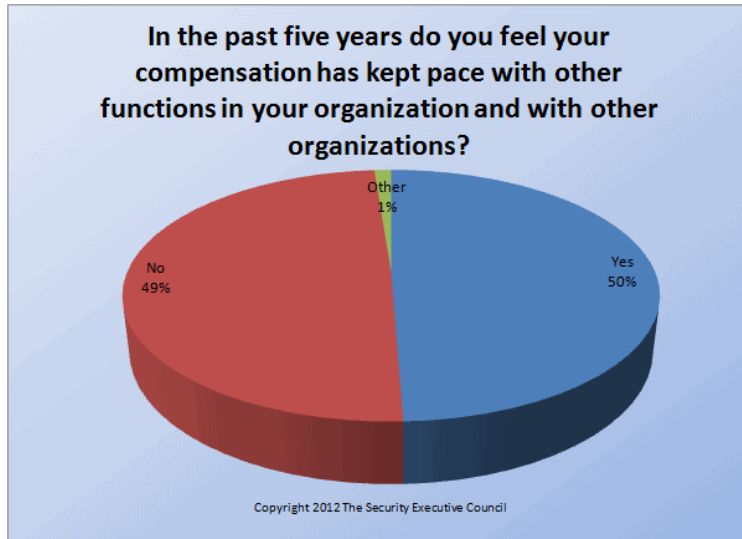
The most common reasons given for not being fairly compensated revolve around the ability to communicate the value security brings to the organization. According to practitioners' responses, educating business executives to view security as a business function that adds value beyond meeting direct legislative or regulatory requirements is a very difficult task.

For a few organizations, cost cutting is being held responsible for low compensation. However, the effect of the slow economy on compensation appears to be easing. A surprising number of respondents reported that other business functions in their organization are seeing increases in compensation, while the security function is being left behind. Even among this group, the common theme is that the insufficient compensation is tied to the inability to communicate why security is necessary for efficient revenue generation.

Why We Are Fairly Compensated

The reasons given by those practitioners who feel they are fairly compensated were clear. This group was able to sell the security team (or their own skills) as a positive to the bottom line. Organizations that recognize the value of security in meeting their revenue goals demonstrate this in their concern for the development and well-being of their security employees. Consequently, their employees end up feeling fairly compensated.

2012 Security Barometer Results:



How Can the Situation Be Improved?

At all levels and functions, compensation is related to the ability to demonstrate the value being brought to the organization. The Council has spent years gathering information from current and former risk managers about what works and what doesn't when it comes to communicating value. This knowledge has been successful in helping risk managers demonstrate value, resulting in everything from position preservation during executive management shake-ups to promotions and increased awareness / funding for programs.

Here are a few take-aways from the Council regarding communicating the value the security function brings to your organization:

- A singular method of communication will not work with all people. Just as some people react to facts and figures while others attune to personality and emotion, each organization has its own corporate culture. The messaging must change to match the audience.
- The use of fear, uncertainty and doubt is not effective in communicating value, and it frequently backfires. Any gains using this method will be temporary.
- Remember that there are many ways to influence revenue. Increasing revenue is not always accomplished through product design or additional sales personnel.

Organizations can increase sales by creating more efficient processes. For example, look at how your security program increases supply chain effectiveness and quality assurance, or how it preserves revenue through theft and fraud prevention.

- In organizations with a strong customer focus, your sales reps may be able to leverage your security program to their advantage when selling to customers. For these organizations, elements like safety, quality of goods and services, and business resilience can be used as selling points.
- Employee well-being is considered critical to most, if not all, organizations. Demonstrating how security provides comfortable and safe operating environments can help make the connection with revenue that business executives demand. Don't forget the role that community involvement can play; public-private partnerships can increase employee security as well as brand awareness.
- Social media has reinforced the lesson that your customers can be your best allies in communicating your value proposition to others. Consider performing an internal customer value analysis to identify who values your services and how to maximize your value to the organization.

2010 Security Barometer Results

The latest results are an interesting contrast to what was gathered from this same question in 2010. The difference in results tends to indicate that either compensation for some is improving or that practitioners are coming to grips with slow economic growth.



Next Steps

In security terms, when nothing negative is happening in an organization, that's a good thing. Unfortunately, "nothing happening" is not such a good thing when it comes to executive awareness of the security function and resultant compensation.

To optimize your program and its ability to demonstrate business value, seek the people who have extensive successful experience at value communication with executives and board members.

Visit the Security Executive Council website for other resources in the [Corporate Security Career: Career Development](#) series.

About the Security Executive Council

The SEC is the leading research and advisory firm focused on corporate security risk mitigation solutions. Having worked with hundreds of companies and organizations we have witnessed the proven practices that produce the most positive transformation. Our subject matter experts have deep expertise in all aspects of security risk mitigation strategy; they collaborate with security leaders to transform security programs into more capable and valued centers of excellence. Watch our [3-minute video](#) to learn more.

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