

Professionalising security management by challenging established notions

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Law enforcement and pure problem-solving skills will play less of a role for the future security director

Much effort has been put down in the professionalisation of security work. Not only is it a recurring topic of conversation at events for security professionals, but also a formal topic of concern for ASIS – having active task forces devoted to the promotion of professionalisation and academisation of security practice as well as a recently updated standard (ANSI/ASIS CSO.1-2013) describing the competence profile of a Chief Security Officer (CSO).

The outer driving forces for this effort are well-known; for example the increase of uncertainties relating to cyber-security threats, industrial espionage, activism and business-related risks when operating in hostile environments. In parallel with this trend, the demands for a formal, ongoing and cost-effective coordination of security work has further increased. Also on the list of organisational demands are clearer and improved business processes that cut across functional and operational value-creating activities, and increased use and sharing of security-supporting technologies. Furthermore, our research shows that physical security since long is a well-established

business process within larger firms and a further development of security management would seem a natural development.

Distinctive for well-established professions are commonly agreed methodologies, techniques and terminology among professionals. Furthermore, a uniform and considerable quality assurance process is often in place in the form of higher education and/or formal licencing. Prime examples of professions often referred to are medical doctors and lawyers. In short, a professional from one country should more or less be able to communicate with colleague in another part of the world.



There is an uncertainty regarding the academic orientation that security management should have

For security management there exists no such well-established equivalent. Institutions of higher education that offer security management are Edith Cowan University in Australia and the specialisation in Security Management that is offered at Wharton at University of Pennsylvania with ASIS as supporting body.

Engineering, criminology or business/management?

For any higher education with a clear identity and recognition the fundamental (research) question of whom or what we are is agreed upon. In effect, establishing a higher education in security management is tightly coupled with the question on what would be general research direction for [security management](#)

. This is an important question – both short-term and long-term. In the short-term it is important to know what universities and schools to target, and long-term to guarantee the profession a development in the right direction and with the intended legitimacy.

A crude division can be made by dividing research and higher education into three general orientations; the first (1) being an orientation towards *engineering* and *problem-solving*; the second (2) being *social scientific* and *criminology* orientation that concerns itself with addressing overarching crime development and underlying structure and motives for criminal behaviour; and third (3), a *business/management* orientation that is concerned with balancing and setting business priorities in a corporate landscape of limited resources. None of these orientations are mutually excluding of one another – all higher education is a mix of a major subject and support subjects. However, some form of declaration of will and consensus about the general orientation is necessary. Worst-case effect might be that security management ends up being academically and institutionally weak as is sometimes the case with over-specialized degrees. When educating security managers, should the general orientation be on of engineering/problem-solving, criminology or business and management? In Sweden, the Higher Education Authority have for example assessed the Security Management degree in Australia as being one in *engineering* (assessment made 08/05/2008).

More business, management and new technology

From the research conducted within the LUSAX research program at the Institute of Economic Research at Lund University a clear majority of survey respondents working corporate security management expresses a need for increased skills of business and management, but also a need to understand novel technology to some extent. Law enforcement and pure problem-solving skills will play less of a role for the future security director. If asking security directors, the answer would be to follow the business/management orientation.



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A third possibility is to position security management as focusing mainly on criminology and behavioural sciences. No explicit and direct demand from security directors was made regarding the need for criminology. However, we believe criminology and behavioural science is an important support subject to security management. A final alternative would be to position security management as a corporate legal activity, but we argue that the legal alternative is one that can be considered of being constraint or factor within the business and management orientation. Also, some security directors have expressed concerns in sorting security management under the legal corporate branch due possible risks of conflicts of interests.

Our research further suggests that the security manager needs further resource enforcement for areas like budgeting, procurement, cost-benefit analysis, new technology and business to mention a few examples. From that point of view, the choice of orientation clearly points to a direction of hosting security management within a business and management orientation. All in all, this could be described as the will for professionalisation from the ones within the profession.

Security Management and its corporate environment

For a more complete analysis it is not sufficient to include only the within-professional will for professionalisation. External forces outside the control of security professionals also govern the answer for the development of the profession. Since the start of LUSAX in 2006 we have repeatedly experienced corporate recruitment of security managers being mainly driven by a corporate interest searching for senior security candidate with a clear and solid law-enforcement background. This is more noticeable in North America and in the United Kingdom where Executive Protection often lies within the scope of security management. This is evident also in industry sectors where physical

security is not typically part of the core business – like media, banking and consultancies.

In summary, in this article we have pointed out that there is an uncertainty regarding the academic orientation that security management should have. We are saying that it is necessary to choose a purposeful academic platform that over times generates the positive effects of professionalisation, for example wide corporate influence, clearer career paths and increased rewards in term of salary and perks. Our answer is to aim for security management to be positioned within a business and management orientation.

Finally, we have also pointed out the importance of changing the environmental attitudes concerning security management. We believe the main hurdle for professionalisation is one mainly hampered by established notions about what background a security manager *should* have. These notions lies outside the control span of the typical security manager, but are pivotal for the professionalisation of the profession.

Author Profile



Markus Lahtinen

Markus Lahtinen holds a Master's degree in Informatics (2001) and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Economics (2006). The past ten years he has been active as lecturer at the Department of Informatics at the School of Economics and Management, teaching mainly Interaction Design but also given classes on Decision Support Systems, UML, IT and organisation, and supervising theses work for students at Bachelor and Master level.