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THE *Open* GROUP

Making standards work™

Security

Security continues to be the top issue in information systems. Much of the emphasis on security has resulted from the demand for secure e-commerce. Security, particularly of distributed systems and telecommunications networks, is no longer about how to keep people out, but how to let them in securely.

Management of risk and the issue of trust are governing progress in the whole field of e-commerce. They are the critical factors holding back further growth. By focusing on solutions in these areas, we are addressing “real” business problems in the e-business community.

Security is now center stage. The continuing development and growth of electronic business depends on improving public confidence in using it. Vulnerability management is a major focus of government-led efforts to effectively protect their national critical infrastructure (including energy, water, transport, food, and communications). All of these have high dependence on IT to control and maintain services; there is much work to be done to improve the security of these IT-based control systems. The Security Forum is working to raise confidence levels by putting in place clear standards and guidelines to counter the whole range of security risks and vulnerabilities.

Join us to benefit from being on the inside track with access to members-only information, decision-making, direction-influencing, and networking with fellow information security professionals worldwide – at meetings, and through web and email. Your commitment is what you decide to make it – the more you put in, the more you will find you take out. Several membership levels are available, to match differing needs.

The Challenge

Customers’ demands are clear: peace of mind and assurances that their information systems are secure yet available to their customers and business partners; systems that are secure, manageable, and interoperable with existing installed systems and future systems purchases. The speed of recent business development has meant that to keep pace with business delivery, security issues have been overlooked or given scant attention. The challenge now is to ensure that all systems development includes compliance with existing security standards and best practice guidelines.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 heightened awareness of the challenge to put in place adequate security in our national and international critical infrastructures to minimize vulnerability to attack. Today’s critical infrastructures are highly dependent on IT systems, so a particular focus now is on developing manageable, interoperable IT security to install the protection they need.

The Role

Over the past 15 years, The Open Group Security Forum has helped its members and the IT industry in general by developing practical security standards and best practice guides. The Open Group – as a neutral body of vendors, users, and institutions – is established as one of the defining authorities for assessing global security needs and implementation of effective solutions. The Open Group Security Forum provides a neutral Forum where business people with responsibility for information security can:

- Meet fellow Security and Risk Management experts and practitioners
- Share ideas and concerns on business risk and security pain-points
- Talk with suppliers and customers from leading technology and legal/insurance/audit organizations worldwide
- Work on new technologies and business processes to deliver security solutions
- Shape the Forum’s direction and priorities
- Keep up-to-date on risk management and security technologies

Security

Work Areas

Having contributed extensively to standards in the IT security areas over the past 18 years, we take the view that there are a lot of individual security solutions for niche problems now available and specified in many places and from many established and recently-formed groups. However, little is being done to enable customers of IT security to make these niche solutions work together.

The Security Forum addresses this problem by taking both a business-oriented and a technical-oriented approach.

In order to assist business managers and decision-makers to make informed choices on what IT security would be most appropriate for them in their increasingly IT-dependent environment, we started publishing our Manager's Guides series. The Guides are written for the business audience – they focus on business perspective and use clear non-technical language. The first two Guides – Manager's Guide to Information Security and Manager's Guide to Data Privacy – discuss in a direct yet informal and factual way how information security solutions can improve your business profitability. We are in the process of writing additional Guides.

On the technical side, we take an architectural approach to evaluating the effectiveness of IT security solutions. Our security architectures development work represents a significant contribution towards The Open Group mission for Boundaryless Information Flow, through its "family of architectures" spanning the whole of the enterprise, and its reference architecture for IT security.

A parallel security architecture project is producing our Technical Guide to Security Design Patterns, incorporating our catalog of design patterns for IT system architects and designers to use in verifying the completeness of their designs and in designing coherent extensions to existing IT systems. This technology is based on proven design patterns methodology, which has significant following among IT architects and designers. The Technical Guide includes a tutorial on how to use patterns to build security architectures tailored to individual business needs.

We are also developing Technical Guides and investigatory White Papers that address and inform on key issues for information security professionals. Current projects include Identity Management, comparisons of different Trust Models, Identity and Authentication, Perimeter Security, Digital Rights Management, and Vulnerability Management.

In the ever-evolving world of IT technology, we are also responsive to new security challenges and requirements, particularly those that respond to security of critical infrastructures, and those that represent real "pain-points" to business users of IT systems. So at any time, we will have several work groups addressing specific projects geared towards delivering practical solutions that will interoperate in an open systems environment. Visit our web site at www.opengroup.org/security to find an up-to-date summary of current work activities and plans.

For More Information

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