

PROFILES IN CONFIDENCE

HIGHLIGHTING PROFESSIONALS
LEADING THE WAY FOR
CONFIDENT SECURITY
PROGRAMS



SEAN MACK CISO & CIO, WILEY

HEADQUARTERS: Hoboken, New Jersey

EMPLOYEES: 5,100+

ANNUAL REVENUE: \$1.7 Billion

SIZE OF SECURITY TEAM: Undisclosed

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Sean Mack has extensive background in all aspects of technology leadership including DevOps, security, cloud, infrastructure, enterprise applications, development, and program management. He has led global teams across a wide range of companies from large financial companies such as Experian to innovative technology companies like Etsy. Throughout his career he has held a variety of technology leadership positions ranging from Vice President of Operations and Applications for Pearson Education to CIO for a start-up in the streaming media space. Mack is currently just shy of two months into his role as CIO and CISO at Wiley, a digital education and research company.

TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

Mack recognizes the increasing pace of innovation in every industry from banking to healthcare, but certainly in education and he says Wiley is currently transforming from a publishing company into a technology and education company.

At the same time, Mack says there are numerous changes within technology that create more challenges for security professionals. He explains, “More software will be developed in the next four years than have been developed in the previous 40. That puts into perspective how much change we are going through every day and that means there’s also new challenges every day.”

In order to address these challenges, Mack sees the need for an unrelenting drive for innovation and continuous improvements in automation. He says he is especially excited about the innovation occurring with containers and infrastructure as code. Mack believes in bringing information about increasing threats and potential attacks together using big data and combining that with machine learning and AI. By doing so, he can leverage machine intelligence,

rather than human intelligence, to try and detect and prevent threats and even anticipate and stop them before they occur.

MANAGING CISO AND CIO RESPONSIBILITIES

“I was at the CIO leadership forum yesterday and they were talking about aligning priorities between the CIO organization and the CISO organization. And I thought, why wouldn’t they be aligned? And then I thought it’s quite easy for me to say that because I’m both,” explains Mack.

Mack acknowledges there may be friction between security and the need to move faster and deliver value. He focuses on enablement and looking at ways to empower the business to move faster and more securely, building ‘fast lanes’ instead of creating gates. He continues, “We see a lot of this when we start to talk about DevOps and DevSecOps. Instead of putting up more gates, let’s automate our security so that it’s part of what we do every day. You can release fast and you can release securely. It’s also about being transparent. By sharing the issues with the other parts of the business you can increase awareness and get everyone involved in ensuring security.”

Mack encourages security leaders to look at increasing security by building collaboration and engagement across an organization instead of making security a blocker. He values security being part of every aspect of an organization, including strong security awareness amongst employees. Something that worked for him in the past has been implementing a security hack week. This may include taking a day to try to attack or find vulnerabilities in your own product or an adjacent product, then fixing those things. By engaging in a company-wide initiative, a groundswell of interest and excitement grows around building things that get to market faster and more securely.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Mack considers himself a transformational leader who is passionate about building things. He comments, “When I look back over my career, some of the things I feel most proud about are the organizations and the ways of working that I built in various companies throughout the years. It is amazing to look at places I’ve worked 10 or 15 years ago where the fundamental structures and teams that we put in place are still in place today. It’s an amazingly gratifying thing to do. It’s really exciting to be able to come into a business and help them transform.”

This type of leadership stems from Mack’s commitment to having a vision and executing that vision in a dedicated manner. For a shared vision to exist, Mack gains mindshare and commitment from his team, so everyone feels they are

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part of the strategic progress. He says the combination of vision and execution are the key things that have helped him drive organizations through transformation, similar to what is occurring at Wiley.

FINDING AND RETAINING TALENT

In order to attract talented individuals, Mack says Wiley is diversifying their global footprint. They recently opened a technology center in Sri Lanka, which is helping to rapidly grow their security team. They also build partnerships with outsourcing providers, along with attracting people by being an innovative company and great place to work.

He comments, “Wiley is a company that has been around for a while, about 200 years. It’s only been here 200 years because of the amount of innovation that goes on. That’s something that’s very attractive to technologists, a company that’s innovating and changing, and continuing to do new and exciting things. I also think people want to be part of a company that’s focused on education. One of the things that attracted me to the company is that ultimately, it’s about using technology to help people learn and grow their lives. Technologist security professionals who have a choice today, want to be part of something that’s bigger than just making the next widget or the next dollar. At Wiley, they have the opportunity to do that.”