

Microsoft Sentinel:

Use Case for Microsoft 365 Incident **Response on Business Email Compromise**

A field guide for deploying of Microsoft Sentinel's Analytic Rules, Workbooks, and Logic Apps for BEC investigators

Version: Draft 1.0

Release date: August 2022



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About this whitepaper

This whitepaper provides a field guide for deploying Microsoft Sentinel's Analytic Rules, Workbooks, and Logic Apps for Business Email Compromise (BEC) investigators. We intend to provide this guide as a reference example by applying an ATT&CK-based approach to handling BEC and phishing attacks.

In Sept 2021, we developed three use cases by referring to practical scenarios from our incident response task assignments in Microsoft hybrid-cloud environment. You could download a copy at https://github.com/DATCResearch, if you missed this paper.

In the past two years, we have handled a few BEC/Phishing scam incidents from our clients, who are international fund management firms. We also remembered three years ago. We have meetings with other business clients' IT team and their management, who are handling cybersecurity issues on selecting vendors to provide services on the cloud-security matter. In those meetings, people usually ask us a simple question: "Are there any perfect security solutions we can use to prevent BEC/phishing attacks?"

Immediately after those meetings, we were invited to talk to the technical staff handling infrastructure or cybersecurity issues. We tried to explain to them that they are using a "not-so-bad" email SaaS application, and they may not require to buy an additional "plug-in solution" to prevent BEC or phishing attacks. What they need to do at first is to configure and manage the application properly. We usually got replies like these:

- We have bought E5 licenses for our tenant members, and the reseller should be responsible for configuring our tenant correctly. We have paid them.
- We have bought Business Premium licenses; the reseller said we could turn on the MFA to prevent BEC attacks, and the default threat policy will automatically protect us. Please don't give the "turn-on MFA" recommendation to our management because that may create additional works for us.
- We have only bought a few E5 licenses, 30% Office E3 licenses, and hundreds of Business Standard licenses. We cannot turn on MFA because our management doesn't want to use MFA, and the Business Standard licenses users cannot use MFA. What threat policies do we need to turn on? Another vendor told us we need to buy an AI-enabled email security solution because our existing email SaaS application requires more workload.

We had been asked to give "friendly" training or advice on configuring their Microsoft 365 tenant. We usually provide them with online materials and advise them to consult an appropriate technical staff from their security vendors who are the email security domain expert or consult their regional Microsoft solution advisors.

We want to provide a use case for making use of Microsoft Sentinel, *in a budget way*, to the community to help them to monitor their tenants and provide a set of practical tools to allow analysts to investigate phishing attacks in the near real-time manner for their tenant.

What is Business Email Compromise (BEC)?

According to the 2021 Internet Crime Report¹ (IC3) from the FBI, BEC/EAC (Email account compromise) has defined a sophisticated scam targeting both businesses and individuals performing transfers of funds. The scam is frequently carried out when a subject compromises legitimate business email accounts through social engineering or computer intrusion techniques to conduct unauthorized funds transfers.

The FBI reported² on May 4, 2022, that \$43 billion in scams continue to grow and evolve, targeting small local businesses to more giant corporations, and found a 65% increase in identified global exposed losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though INTERPOL³ and US DOJ⁴ announced the arrest and charging of some prominent fraudsters, phishing scam activities are expanding in Hong Kong, especially among the local office of investment funds. On March 22, 2022, the Securities and Future Commission ("SFC") published circular⁵ about BEC duping unwary staff of licensed corporations (LCs) into sending money and sensitive information.



Figures extracted from the 2021 Internet Crime Report (IC3)

Back in August 2017, Andy Robinson of the University of Portsmouth – Institute of Criminal Justice Studies published an in-depth study of BEC attacks entitled "Hacking the Boardroom: Business Email Compromise More than CEO Fraud," in which he evaluates the UK Government "4-P's" approach to cybercrime, how this is currently applied to BEC threats, threat mitigation, and future threat predictions. This research also examines the

¹ https://www.ic3.gov/Media/PDF/AnnualReport/2021 IC3Report.pdf

² https://www.ic3.gov/Media/Y2022/PSA220504

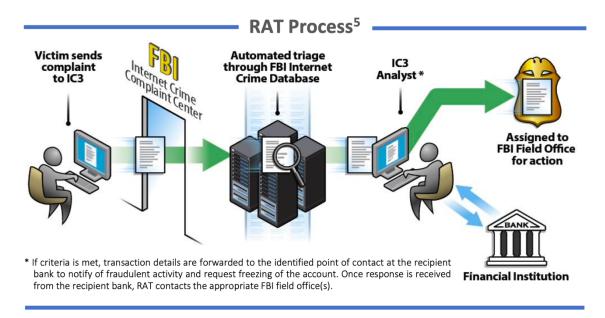
³ https://unit42.paloaltonetworks.com/operation-delilah-business-email-compromise-actor/

⁴ https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/nigerian-man-extradited-united-kingdom-participating-business-email-compromise-scams

⁵ https://apps.sfc.hk/edistributionWeb/api/circular/openFile?lang=EN&refNo=22EC25

cybersecurity practices of those targeted by BEC cybercriminals and how those at the top of the organizations can be the biggest weakness. The paper also created a threat intelligence term for BEC - "Financial Fraud Kill Chain" (FFKC), which was adopted and used by various financial institutions⁶.

The IC3 Report disclosed that fraudsters have become more sophisticated, and the BEC/EAC scheme has continually evolved in covid pandemic. The IC3 has observed an emergence of newer BEC/EAC schemes that exploit this reliance on virtual meetings to instruct victims to send fraudulent wire transfers. The fraudster would insert a still picture of the CEO with no audio or a "deep fake" audio through which fraudsters, acting as business executives, would then claim their audio/video was not working correctly. "Based on the financial data reported to the IC3 for 2021, banks in Thailand and Hong Kong were the primary international destinations of fraudulent funds," the FBI said.



Automated triage and RAT Process adopted by FBI

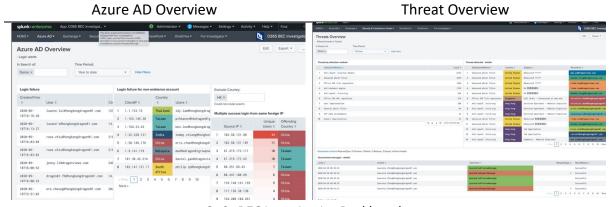
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 $^{^{6}}$ https://www.abais.com/blogs/detail/blog/2022/02/04/financial-fraud-kill-chain-may-prevent-wire-transfer-fraud

Why use Microsoft Sentinel?

Since 2018, we have started publishing cybersecurity alerts⁷ and white papers⁸ on BEC incidents in Hong Kong. In the past three years, we have handled several BEC/Phishing scam incidents from various clients, including a few international fund management firms. We believe this business segment is under targeted attacks because most of them do not have designated professionals handling the email security issue, and these firms handle a high frequency of wires or remittances to their business partners or investors all around the world.

In the past, most IR cases we handled were not using Microsoft Sentinel. We collected the Unified Audit Logs (UAL) from the victim tenants and used eDiscovery features to obtain the affected mailbox for our investigations. The detailed procedures on how we collect the forensic evidence were described in our latest paper – Microsoft 365 Forensics Playbook⁹. After obtaining the UAL, we performed the same procedures described in a BEC investigation guide by the PwC UK¹⁰. Instead of parsing the required UAL by the Search-UnifiedAuditLog cmdlet or using Office 365 Management API, we ingested the downloaded UAL into our O365 BEC Investigation Dashboards in speed up our investigation.



O365 BEC Investigation Dashboards

We ingest the UAL by using Office 365 Management API to keep monitoring our client's tenants' phishing landscape.

After we published our Sentinel use cases white paper, we started working on the possibility of collecting OfficeActivity and AAD SignInLogs instead of UAL for our near real-time monitoring of the threat landscape of our client's tenants.

⁷ https://www.dragonadvancetech.com/reports/Business-Email-Compromise.pdf

⁸ https://www.dragonadvancetech.com/reports/Security-White-Paper-on-BEC.pdf & https://www.dragonadvancetech.com/reports/O365-IR%20Playbook v1.0.pdf

⁹ https://dragonadvancetech.com/reports/M365%20Forensics%20Playbook_v3.pdf

¹⁰ https://github.com/PwC-IR

Microsoft Sentinel Data Connectors

Subject to some prerequisites, the first data connector you should add is User and Entity Behavior Analytics (UEBA)¹¹. Microsoft Sentinel will analyze the sign-in activities and the audit logs generated from the Azure Active Directory and builds a baseline for the UEBA-enabled tenant to identify anomalous activity to evaluate the potential impact of any given compromised asset.

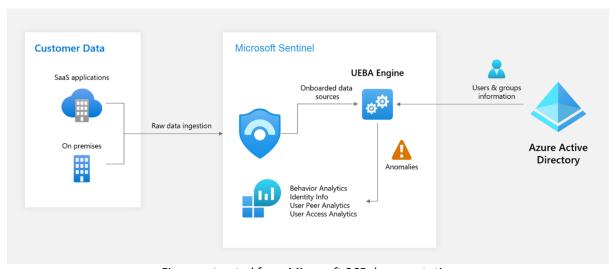


Figure extracted from Microsoft 365 documentation

After you set up the connection, Microsoft Sentinel will store the "non-billable" Azure Active Directory information in an internal database visible through the *IdentityInfo* table in Log Analytics. This table provides information of Risk Level (such as: Low, Medium, High, or None) and Risk State (such as: AtRisk, Remediated, or Dismissed) of the tenant users to the Sentinel. Combine with the "AI-enabled" (we guess) *AADUserRiskEvents* table, we can generate a highly valuable Workbook contents on users' Risk Detail (such as aiConfirmedSigninSafe, userPerformedSecuredPasswordReset, hidden, or none) and Risk Event Type (such as unfamiliarFeatures, unlikelyTravel, or generic) for further analysis.

Active Sign-In Risk by Users			
${\sf TimeGenerate} {\uparrow}{\downarrow} {\sf AccountDispl} {\uparrow}{\downarrow}$	RiskLevel ↑↓	RiskState ↑↓	f:.↓ OnPremisesDistinguis
8/17/2022, 6:26:45 Incident Response	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/17/2022, 6:26:45 Ken Ma	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/17/2022, 6:26:45 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/17/2022, 11:22:0 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/17/2022, 9:55:03 Incident Response	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/11/2022, 11:11:2 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/8/2022, 2:42:15 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/5/2022, 11:34:52 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/3/2022, 6:17:14 Ken Ma	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/3/2022, 6:17:14 Incident Response	Medium	AtRisk	true
8/3/2022, 6:17:14 Ken Ma (admin)	Medium	AtRisk	true

Figure extracted from Workbook of [DATC] – Azure AD > (User Identity Assessment)

¹¹ https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/sentinel/identify-threats-with-entity-behavior-analytics

We assume normal community users only bought a few Office E3 licenses or Business Premium licenses, and we hope our use case can be applied for a large segment of entities in a budget (*non-billable*¹²) way, we only connect the following data sources to the Microsoft Sentinel (if you ingest Security Events from endpoint, you must at least buy a basic Sentinel subscription):

- Azure Active Directory (tables of: SigninLogs, AuditLogs, AADNonInteractiveUserSignInLogs, AADUserRiskEvents)
- Office 365 (tables of OfficeActivity)
- Optional: Microsoft 365 Defender (table of SecurityIncident, SecurityAlert, EmailEvents, EmailUrlInfo, EmailAttachmentInfo, AlertEvidence)

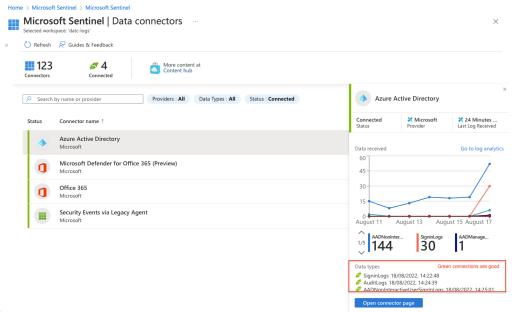


Figure extracted from Data connectors of DATC tenant, with only E3 licenses

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¹² https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/sentinel/billing?tabs=commitment-tier

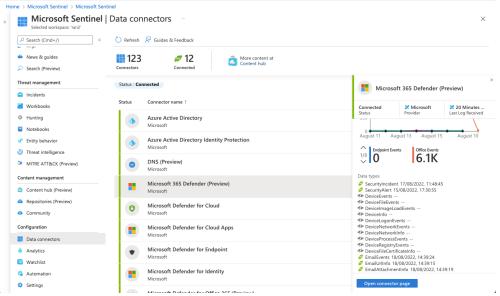


Figure extracted from Data connectors of DATC tenant, with E5 licenses

Microsoft Sentinel Analytics Rules

According to Microsoft documentation, after you've connected your data sources to Microsoft Sentinel, you'll want to be notified when something suspicious occurs. There are many out-of-the-box threat detection rules¹³ and anomaly detection rules¹⁴ that can be deployed and customized at your option.

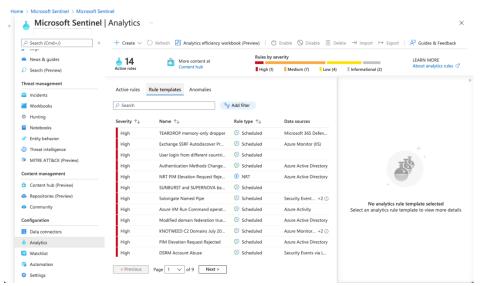


Figure extracted from Rule templates

¹³ https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/sentinel/detect-threats-built-in

¹⁴ https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/sentinel/work-with-anomaly-rules

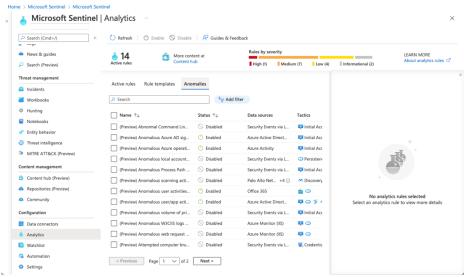


Figure extracted from Anomalies Rules

Most rules are significant and valuable for a full scale implementation which can generate detection alerts when a suspicious event occurs. However, we found most of them are not helpful for our target tenant users because of the following reasons:

- The rules only work for the suitable data sources, but the tenant only ingests a few
- The rules generate many alerts that a traditional IT Help Desk does not understand
- Under the Rule templates, there are many rules designed to detect a unique threat
- Some Anomalies Rules easy to generate false positive alerts
- Some schedule rules provide insight for a particular data source but can be modified to generate meaningful alerts when applied to another ingested data source

In our opinion, all Rule templates or Anomalies Rules are good but not always suitable for Sentinel users in the early deployment stage. We recommend that new Sentinel users carefully select the appropriate rules for their use, try to deploy a few first then add later. Select the rules that you have already ingested the right data sources. Or otherwise, you see nothing from the deployed rules. Tune the Severity of the rules to your needs and make sure the scheduled tasks are configured to run at the right frequency at your tenant's requirements (running the schedule rules will cost you more and will generate more alerts if not properly configured – aka alert fatigue).

Because this use case is designed to detect and generate alerts on suspicious BEC or Phishing activities, we modified some of the rules provided by the content hub. We added a few to ourselves to our tenant. We carefully configured the schedule frequency and modified the rule names with a few addon notes so that anyone on our team knows what it means without the need to check the KQL query when handling an alert. Some detection alerts should be reclassified to a combination of more medium and less High and Informational for prioritization.

We prefer not to provide detailed explanations of why and how we create these rules. Please feel free to study and modify our rules for your use. You can find our rules at https://github.com/DATCResearch/Sentinel-UseCase-BEC365-IR.

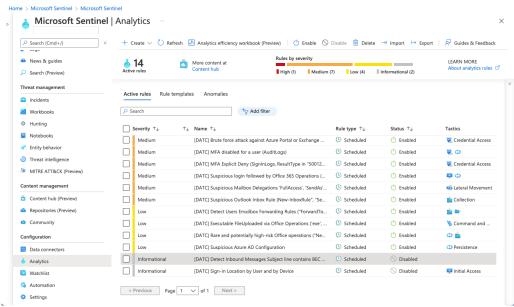


Figure extracted from our designed 14-Rules for Phishing/BEC detections

Microsoft Sentinel Workbooks

After connecting the data sources to Microsoft Sentinel, you can visualize and monitor the data with Microsoft Sentinel Workbooks. At first, we treat the Workbooks the same as Dashboards. However, we believe that if we can have a better design of the Workbooks, we can use Workbooks as interactive tools to help investigate incidents or alerts.

Same as the analytic rules template, Microsoft Sentinel provided a content hub to allow users to download for use. We spent a great deal of time modifying and developing our Workbooks to help our team to detect, monitor, mitigate, and contain incidents in BEC and phishing attacks.

We designed two Workbooks as a demo for community users. If MSP, especially for those who are in my region, wants to use our Workbooks for commercial use, please notify us ir@dragonadvancetech.com.

We prefer not the provide detailed explanations of why and how we create these Workbooks. However, we screen shots some parts of the Workbooks, which are attached in the appendix as a reference. We also keep copies of our full workbooks in pdf format at https://github.com/DATCResearch/Sentinel-UseCase-BEC365-IR. Please feel free to study and modify our Workbooks for your.

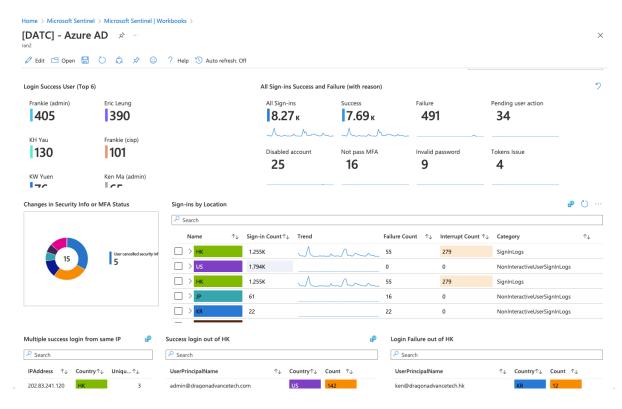
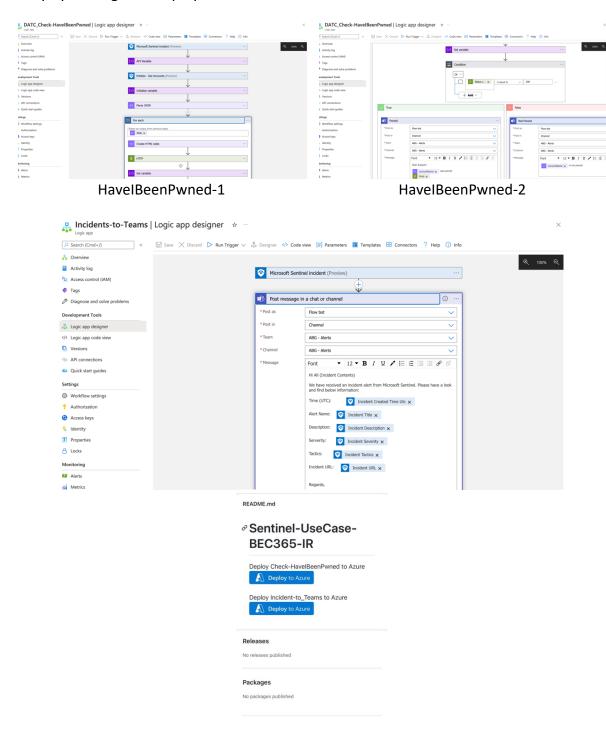


Figure extracted AAD – Overview Workbook

Microsoft Sentinel Logic Apps

The rules can be configured to generate alerts and incidents to the Sentinel, and it is great to have the SOAR function to automate some standardized incident response processes. The Playbook features provide a great option when handling the enrichment, mitigation, eradiation, and response functions in an ideal way.

However, we hope our use case be used in a budget way. Therefore, we only implemented two incident trigger Automation Playbooks as an example. We believe you can depooy them easily by clicking the "Deploy to Azure" button.



Appendix I: Workbooks



Appendix II: Services Offered

Sample organization, 50-2500 employees					
Resource	Key tasks	Benchmark duration			
type/Function		(days)			
Project manager	PlanningStakeholder engagementResource planningProject management				
Security architect	 Data ingestion strategy RBAC controls Access control Log source to be ingested Use case development Identify gaps with MITRE ATT&CK log source 				
Azure Cloud engineer	 Managing permission/RBAC in Azure tenant Provision Azure resources Configure Azure AD service accounts Configure Azure AD groups and membership 				
Engineering system owner	 Configuring log forwarding on assets IT sysadmin: deploying monitoring agents Deploy on-perm Azure Sentinel log collector Provide expertise on application logging by mapping to critical assets Configuring application logging Assist n validation of alert rules and SOAR playbooks 				
SIEM engineering	 Developing custom KQL detection rules Developing custom workbooks for data visualization Creating Azure function for data parsing Creating playbooks for IR automation 				
Security operations	 Documentation of detection use cases and detection rules 				

	Documentation of detection	
	parameters and threat	
	intelligence sources	
MDR for Endpoint	Gain threat context: Our threat	
WIDK for Enapoint		
	intelligence enriches alerts to	
	inform decision making	
	• 24x7 coverage	
	Hunting for stealthy threat for ALTER ALTER OF THE STATE OF THE	
	mapping into MITRE ATT&CK®	
	framework	
	Advices on contain impacted	
	hosts	
	Rapid Response: Our experts	
	quickly assess and contain	
	threats, helping you resolve	
	incidents without the added cost	
	of full incident response	
	Effective remediation: We	
	perform rapid investigation and	
	remediation based on the	
	collective knowledge of our	
	experts	
	Elevate your defenses: Improve	
	your security posture with	
	ongoing assessment and	
MDD to a Office 3CE	real-world strategies	
MDR for Office 365	Monitor and alert against security	
Activity	threats	
	Monitor business data against	
	leaks	
	Know what is happening in Office 365	
	organization's Office 365	
	Build on Azure Cloud Services, Office 205 Activity Consults	
	Office 365 Activity Security	
	Monitoring is a managed security	
	service using the power of Azure	
	Sentinel platform and benefits of	
	Azure Logic Apps	
	• Fast delivery	
	• 7x24 coverage	
	On-site incident response service	
Annua Carlin I	package	
Azure Sentinel	Fast delivery	
MSSP Service	• 7x24 coverage	
	 Deployment and configuration of 	
	Azure Sentinel SIEM in customer	

- Azure subscription and activation of the Office 365 Data Connector. Our team will assist customer to enable auditing in Office 365
- Configuration of more than 25 alert rules related to Office 365 data source for monitoring activities to Sharepoint Online, Exchange Online and OneDrive
- SIEM support during security incidents: Managed Sentinel has extensive hands-on experience managing complex security breaches and will support the customer during security incidents with analytics, threat hunting and custom reporting.
- Teams and DLP Security
 Monitoring: Configure a custom
 API function to extract events
 related to these workloads and
 publish it into Azure Sentinel Log
 Analytics. Additional alert rules
 will be configured for these
 events.
- Continuous Use Case Tuning: The most valuable component of a managed SIEM service consists in the continuous alerts and playbooks tune-up in order to stay aligned with the current threat landscape. Managed Sentinel has over 20 years of experience in cybersecurity monitoring.
- Embedded Threat Intelligence:
 Our proprietary machine learning
 algorithm and dark web discovery
 are leveraged to enrich the
 collected data and expedite
 cybersecurity investigations.
- Regular Service Review: Managed Sentinel SOC team meets regularly the customer to review and collect feedback and new requirements on alerts, playbooks and workbooks.

	 Note 1: This service will run in customer Azure subscription Note 2: This service is restricted to Office Activity events only 	
Azure Sentinel SIEM Managed Service (Full SOC)	 Azure Sentinel MSSP Services as described above, plus: Develop practical use cases according to your unique IT infrastructure Our Tier-2 & Tier-3 advisors with experience and skills and using our threat intelligence feeds and risk & threat modelling to provide assurance to prevent modern threats and prioritise cyber threats to your business and work with you to prevent those threats becoming a reality. We address your issues business face the most: Ever-evolving threats, offensive techniques and technologies Constant firefighting, point solutions and incident response overheads Corporate reputation, brand protection, "insider threat" and regulatory compliance Perimeter-less networks, cloud and SaaS solutions combined with employee mobility Budget constraints, difficulty in recruitment and retaining skilled resource Unique SOC service plan with unique SLA will be provided after consultation 	
	CONSUITATION	