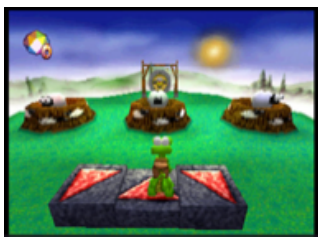


notes on moving into cybersecurity

Sept 18, 2022

Last weekend I gave a talk at BSides Melbourne in the career village. My talk was about 'My first twelve months in cyber security'. I thought it might help someone starting out but also how an experienced infosec peep could help someone make a career jump and land softly.



What do I do with my life? How do I find the right place for me? During high school I was a dreamer, lonely and was not a great student.

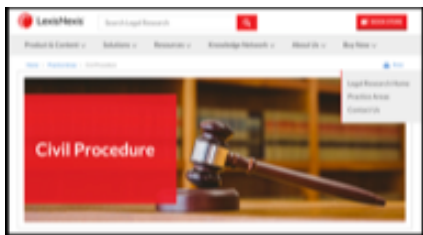
But when you're thinking about what to do with your life it isn't lush green with fluffy sheep. It's more like lava. It's really hard to know what to do. I ended up graduating with a Bachelor of Arts. I stretched it out over quite a few years. I really liked uni and didn't know what to do so I did some postgrad. I graduated with a Master of Philosophy. This didn't really give me a lot of career options.



But after a bit of brainstorming my girlfriend and I decided to move to Sydney and try and get into publishing.



After working in retail for a bit I landed a publishing editor role at LexisNexis.



I worked as a publishing editor for about six months. But I didn't really want to stay in the role. Coding all day was tough. Well, I think it was being stuck at my desk all day that was hard. A vacancy came up as a team leader so I moved into that. Over the next few years I moved into managing larger teams and projects.

We moved back to Perth and I moved into project management. Over the next few years I worked in quite a few project management offices (PMOs). But I was starting to get a bit over it. I was frustrated with senior managers who were too scared to put down that projects were in the red and put them down as amber in reports, and documents that I had put together that were just filed away. I was over bad managers who would rewrite perfectly good briefing notes I'd written or delayed making decisions on important projects.



So I deleted all my social media accounts to stop from getting distracted. I took some time to work out what my next step should be. I had run a few experiments with startup ideas but couldn't find the

right problem that I could solve.



I remembered Paul. I was working as a PMO manager and asking Paul about one of the projects and he said that his team would do a pentest. I asked him what a pentest was and he patiently explained.



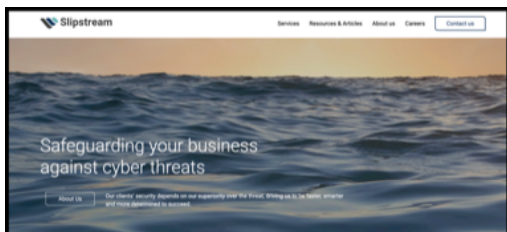
Around this time he was also trying to promote cybersecurity awareness to the department. He organised StayCyberSafe workshops, fact sheets, quizzes and everyone was on alert for a phishing email that was due to hit inboxes.



Paul left a copy of the Family Zone book in the staff kitchen area. It had a list of apps and their safety ratings. Paul was also happy to talk over the contents of the book which I found helpful and reassuring.



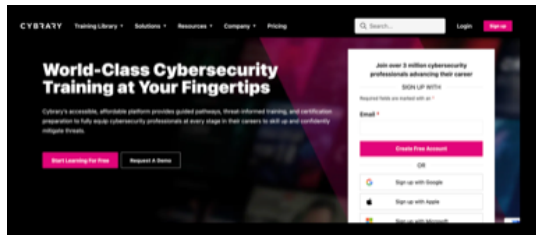
Silvana from StayCyberSafe organised for Kevin Mitnick to visit Perth. Mitnick did a show and tell about the dangers of key logger implants on USB cables and how vulnerable using PayPal and online banking can be.



I started looking around for cyber stuff near me in Perth. It felt overwhelming at the beginning. There is so much information. How do you know who is reliable, reputable?



What really helped was the 'Build Your Career' page. It gave me a short list of curated resources. It just made it easier knowing that this Perth startup listed these sites as useful and that they were thinking about how to help others.

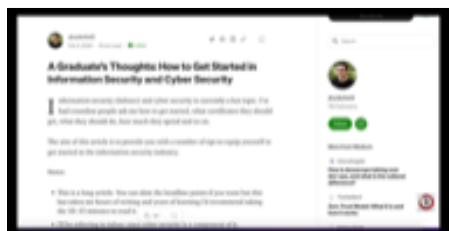


So I spent time checking them all out. Reading, watching videos and taking notes.



I was starting to get a clearer direction. I felt that I was starting from zero but then I realised that I was bringing skills that were much needed - writing and building relationships. That realisation helped.

I continued searching for advice and I came across an article by 'drunkrhin0'. A quick search on twitter and I found drunkrhin0 is a fellow Perth peep. It's kind of like when you've been living abroad and you hear an accent that sounds like yours or ordering the same coffee as you. (My coffee order is ridiculous but if someone is going to make it, it has to be exactly the way I want it, but more about that another time).



A grad from my hometown sharing his thoughts, hold my calls I have to sit down and digest this article. I also watched drunkrhin0's ComfyCon talk too. 🐱 Here is a guy giving up his time to help others getting into infosec and cyber security, it's commendable. Drunkrhin0's had so much valuable advice. What I didn't know then was that I would get even more inspo from drunkrhin0.

The next thing that I found was ComfyCon. An online conference that is recorded and has talks on YouTube. But conferences done differently. No sponsors, no suits, no bullshit. Infosec peeps giving talks from their homes that you can watch in your lounge room. During ComfyCon 2022 I laughed so much from the quick wit and banter of the group.

What really is special about ComfyCon is the discord community. A small group of peeps who are supportive, helpful and funny. A safe place. I was nervous about joining but I quickly found it to be a safe place to not just ask questions about the merits of a TAFE course or external hard drives but to share struggles with anxiety and depression. ComfyCon was a life line. I had been freelancing for a few years and working from home. I found it quite isolating at times. I yearned to have people I could chat with who were also learning new things.



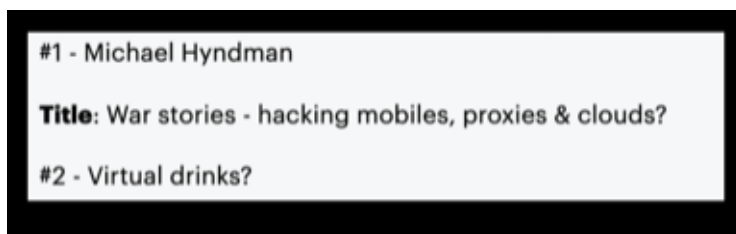
I also found my break into cyber security through ComfyCon. I feel it was partly luck that within a few months of joining the ComfyCon community a freelance gig came up that I felt I had the exact skills for. I was stoked that my skills from publishing and projects would come in handy for a gig in cyber security.



Going to conferences when you don't know anyone is hard. What helped was being on a table and having someone just start chatting with me. It meant a lot. It also gave me a favourable impression of the company he worked for.

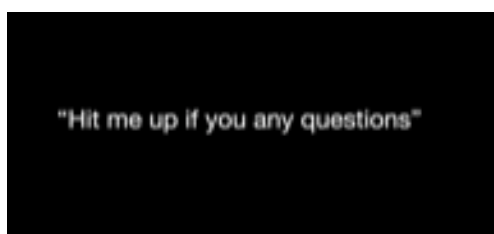


Attending SecTalks has been really cool. I have been to three so far. Though I haven't understood all of the talks it is pretty exciting when there is a part that I did understand. So I'd recommend attending events as you might here one thing that interests you and you might want to learn more about it.



But also share what you have been working on. If you've been head down working on something you might not realise how many other people would like to hear about what you're working on, what made you do it and what you have learnt.

It's what happened at the end of one SecTalks that had a huge impact on me. Both Michael and drunkrhin0 offered to answer questions about bug bounties.



As someone who is starting out in bug hunting to have two experienced peeps offer to answer questions meant a lot.

evildaemon brings his lock picking stash to BSidesPerth. It also helped me as I didn't know anyone at my first BSides. Share what you

are into - if you're into knife making or watches. Just start a conversation with someone at an event. I didn't know anyone at BSides but I noticed the chap next to me wearing a very sweet watch. So we started talking about Rolexes and how covid has effected the supply of them.



I didn't expect cyber security peeps to be so supportive, friendly and funny. It was daunting to make the jump but having supportive infosec peeps made my landing smoother. I hope this article shows how little gestures can have a huge positive impact.

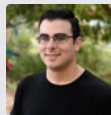


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drunkrhin0 – Medium

Read writing from drunkrhin0 on Medium....
medium.com



<https://www.au.comfycon.rocks/>