

KAREN STEPHENS

Karen Stephens is the co-founder and CEO of BCyber. After more than 25 years in financial services, Karen moved into SME cybersecurity risk management. She works with SMEs to protect and grow their businesses by demystifying the technical aspects of cybersecurity and helping them to identify and address cybersecurity and governance risk gaps. She was recently named inaugural Female Cyber Leader of the Year at the 2023 CyberSecurity Connect Awards in Canberra.



C O L U M N

On the edge of innovation: breaking boundaries in 2024 by learning from 2023

I don't know about you, but for me 2023 has been a year of extreme highs and lows, I would describe as 'character building'. I am definitely in the 'let's learn from it' club, so it's time to reflect on key 2023 'boundary breaking' themes, taking what we can from them into 2024 to make it bigger, better and brighter than 2023.

I invite you to take a moment and join me, as I revisit this column's themes in 2023.

The March/April edition (p66) Shone a spotlight on the strength that diversity can bring to cybersecurity. Diversity of experience is key to a thriving cybersecurity ecosystem, and we can all play our part. For example, you can continue to look beyond the traditional employee candidates. What about those who have great communication skills and can learn the tech skills? (The latter are easier for people to learn than the former, trust me on this). Or step out of your comfort zone and make yourself approachable and available to those entering the industry. After all, you can never have too much coffee in your life!

The May/June edition (p64) Reconfirmed that cybersecurity is not just a tech problem. Communicating this fact is a never-ending battle. I feel I have been saying this ever since I joined the cybersecurity industry, and feared no one was listening. But I am rather excited to say I am now seeing green shoots of progress. Recently, I have noticed heads of risk, governance and compliance starting to raise the "what are we doing about cybersecurity topic?" A risk-centred approach is gaining traction! Remember: the best security software can be easily undone if you have uneducated

staff working in a culture of "don't ask, don't tell" when they click on a bad link.

The July/August edition (p58) Focussed on empowering the over 50 percent of Australians who are largely ignored and yet usually impacted the most by cyber breaches: the SMEs, school children and retirees. Not a day goes by when the mainstream press does not wheel out some horror story, or talkback radio show discusses how clicking on a bad link ruined someone's life. Let's make 2024 the year we bring cyber awareness to all: throughout the year, not only in October, the designated Cyber Awareness Month.

The September/October edition (p84) Was all about personal growth. I urged readers to focus on 'outside the box' activities: networking, allies, micro courses. What did you do? If the answer is "Not much, I got busy," with New Year right around the corner, it will soon be time for resolutions.

Make 2024 your time for doing, and not just for making resolutions! In the words of Winston Churchill: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it". Let's not be those people in 2024!

May you and yours have a cyber-safe festive season with 2024 bringing only peace, joy, and happiness.



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