



Getting to "so what"

This week I attended the 2014 RSA Security Conference in San Francisco and boy was it impressive! The lights, the sounds, the crazy vendor displays! It was a buffet for the brain and I literally walked away from the conference floor with a severe case of sensory overload. I had the opportunity to meet with several great vendors and chat with them about their products and really understand what they do. The products these days are amazing and they are really solving some interesting problems that help to secure nearly every aspect of a computing environment. Yet the place that almost 100% of the product vendors failed was to articulate the “so what” and clearly delineate where the product’s functionality ended and human interaction (be it a consultant’s actions or client’s actions) begin.

I saw dashboards of data with impressive charts and visualization. I saw drill-down capabilities that told me interesting things. I saw real-time analytics that could display flows of data overlays with animated graphics and icons. But I kept on asking “so what?” What do I do now? How do I harness this new, cool and graphical data and take action on it. I kept on probing and asking “what do I do next?” The answer most of the times came down to that classic “it depends.” (I love that phrase...) But at least give me options! Do I cut access to a user account? Do I call the authorities? Do I adjust my policy to allow different services to run in my environment? Well, that all depends...

I believe we are at a turning point where software vendors and consultants alike must stop drowning our customers in data and start providing real, actionable, decision-oriented information. Be it in a report or an app, focus your key messages on the “so what” and don’t rely on the end-user to come to their own conclusions. Be clear, be decisive and make a clear recommendation on next steps.

The sooner you can get to the “so what,” the better!



hi, i'm justin
(nice to meet you)

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