

# Key Findings from THE STATE OF SECURITY MANAGEMENT

## A Baseline Phenomenological and Empirical Study

Funded by



### MODULE 2:

## Understand That People Matter

Security executives and thought leaders should avoid the temptation to dismiss the critical and enduring role of human beings—both as a threat and as a resource—in performing their mission. Despite the undeniable and growing influence of technology in our everyday world, security management is still, and will continue to be, largely a “people” function.

Despite extraordinary advances in technology and the rapidly increasing complexity of the global business/organizational environment, security management is still largely a “people” function. That conclusion was evident in this project’s findings and the security literature, and it was particularly prominent in the project’s thought leader interviews. Every person interviewed made it absolutely clear that security management revolves around people—and will continue to do so through the foreseeable future.

The ASIS Chief Security Officer (CSO) Standard lists eight key success factors of a successful senior security executive. Six of the eight are people skills versus purely technical skills. Among the list’s terms are innovation, integrity, ability to influence, ability to adapt, and relationship management. The standard describes “the management of positive working relationships among stakeholder and client groups” as a core responsibility. It further states that an effective

model for a security executive would combine leadership talent and business acumen with subject matter expertise.

This project’s survey respondents clearly emphasized people skills over technical skills when asked which skills and qualifications are needed in a successful security professional. The top skills listed as “absolutely critical” were:

- ability to react quickly in a crisis
- interpersonal skills and the ability to deal with people
- ability to think strategically
- ability to be flexible and adapt to changing situations
- ability to make a business case, influence decisions, and advocate for a position
- ability to learn and adapt new skills

Comments from survey respondents also confirmed that security management is about people. When asked, “How do you influence decisions in your organization?” for example, they mentioned these human and interpersonal skills:

- practicing assertive communication
- explaining and convincing by understanding the issue
- demonstrating knowledge of the business and how an issue fits into the overall strategy
- anticipating the needs of stakeholders
- being included and recognized as a trusted advisor, partner, or consultant
- building relationships over time and garnering trust
- exercising and demonstrating integrity
- being recognized as credible

These terms align well with other sources, such as thought leader interviews and the security literature, including security management textbooks and ASIS International

## SECURITY THOUGHT LEADER PERSPECTIVE:

### People Skills Are Absolutely Essential

*“Our profession is about people and the way people, either individually or culturally, act. We’re dealing with a human-based profession. Understanding that in a business sense and a cultural sense, as well as at the individual level, [is essential].”*

—Whit Chaiyabhat,  
CPP, MBCI, CBCP, CEM

Standards and Guidelines. The book *Homeland Security and Private Sector Business* (Lee, 2015), summarizes this issue well:

Today, relationship building is an important skill in the workplace. It is necessary to effectively interact, communicate, manage, and lead others.... When it comes to security, most organizations...overlook the human factor—people. All security measures begin and end with people.

The second in a series of nine modules, this paper explores the findings of an ASIS Foundation study conducted by Kevin E. Peterson, CPP, CIPM II and Joe Roberts, Ph.D. in 2020 and 2021. To download the full *State of Security Management* report, visit [asisfoundation.org](https://www.asisfoundation.org).

The ASIS Foundation, an affiliate of ASIS International, helps security professionals achieve their career goals with certification scholarships, practical research, member hardship grants, and more. The Foundation is supported by generous donations from ASIS members, chapters, and organizations. Online at [www.asisfoundation.org](https://www.asisfoundation.org).