



# Security Executive Council

RISK MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

## From One Winning Career to the Next

Transitioning Public Sector  
Leadership and Security Expertise  
to the Business Bottom Line

COMPLIMENTARY SUPPLEMENT  
FOR SEC PRACTITIONERS

J. David Quilter

# THE SEC PROCESS

We walk clients through eight critical steps to reach their goals



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The first step is an assessment of your current environment. What needs improving? What are Security's fixed conditions? What recent changes have impacted Security, such as new business directions, new stakeholders, or a merger or acquisition?



An SEC team made up of former CSOs will engage with you to identify the key risks and determine the continuum of desired outcomes depending on your conditions. We map the solution to your C4R – current circumstances, conditions, culture and resources.



Once we understand the issues and potential barriers, we search our extensive security knowledge base for resources or research data that can be used as a base or to kickstart direction ideas.



Next, our subject matter experts bring their varied experiences and knowledge together to create a plan to help you reach your desired outcome. We call this Collective Knowledge™.



We help determine which other functions the plan should touch and align with. We use the SEC's Unified Risk Oversight™ model to help plan and communicate the value of cross-functional collaboration.



We assist in communicating the value of the project to the business leader accountable for Security's new vision. This in turn assists in communicating the strategy to senior executives from other functions.



Business value metrics are developed for the client team to measure and determine project success for the organization, including key stakeholders.



Last, clients can either take the SEC deliverables and run with them, or we can guide you through the implementation of your plan. At the end of the day, the SEC is here to help you succeed.

The SEC Process Outcome: Security Leader and Program Success

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COMPLIMENTARY SAMPLE  
FOR SEC PRACTITIONER COMMUNITY

# CHAPTER 3

## Reconnaissance (Before You Sign On)

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

Chinese Proverb

Before you sign on as a security leader with any company, be sure that you have the skills outlined in Chapter 2, or that you are willing to work hard to acquire those you will need as part of a team. In order to do such tasks with competence and eventually with some ease, you must truly enjoy most parts of the job—including the challenges. Once you have realistically assessed your skills, usually in consultation with others—preferably persons who know both you and the field of security leadership—you must not be hesitant to negotiate what is right for you.

Prepare carefully for interviews. For example, research the company and its executives in some of the ways suggested below; reflect on the culture of the company and whether it appeals to you; and be especially alert for any tough questions that occur to you and think about how you want to ask them. Courtesy may seem to be an old-fashioned virtue, but it is much in demand and indicates a level of *savoir-faire*—the know-how needed in security leadership.

When I returned to Syracuse from the Marine Corps, I thought I wanted to be a salesman for a large company. I had interviewed with IBM and some other businesses and had been offered positions, but nothing interested me. My dad encouraged me to apply for work at the company he had served for many years. I met with the president and owner of the firm, laid out what I could do, and what I wanted to be paid. I thought the interview had gone very well; the president, however, was shocked at my forthrightness.

Soon after this interview, I entered federal law enforcement. I was not interviewed again for over 20 years. Since then, I have been in many leadership roles in corporations. What I have learned is, during interviews, be as direct as possible and don't overstate your qualifications. Tell the firm's representatives what you can and cannot do,

what you expect of the organization's leaders, your priorities in terms of access to the C-level, and anything else that you see as critical to your serving this company well. Listen carefully and be observant for what this company does in practice, not just what it says about itself.

Honest interviews prevent second guessing later on. You know your tasks for the company and executives know what you expect of them. Such agreements at least get you off on a sound footing.

Successful organizations have a variety of underpinnings. One of the most important of these is professional discipline. This attribute may be evaluated at many levels. From the time you first contact an organization, or they contact you, begin keeping notes. How was the contact initiated? Once an inquiry goes beyond an informal review of your resume, pay particular attention to how those in the business heard of you.

As you research the company formally and informally, as well as during your interviews, be alert for anything that seems out of sync. Try to get perspective on the company from someone who knows both its operations and its culture. Here are some specific questions to consider:

- Is the interview process itself well defined and professionally conducted?
- Is the reception area a controlled environment? Was your arrival anticipated?
- Were employees, executives, and others wearing ID badges?
- Are those who come into the building checked in electronically or visually at points of entry?
- What books, pictures, or artwork decorate the office?
- How are you seated for the interview? Is the atmosphere formal or informal?
- Does the music of peoples' body language harmonize with their words? (At least 80% of communication is nonverbal.)
- Do you feel comfortable, or out of place, in this environment?
- Does anything strike you as too casual or disorganized?
- Are those conducting the interview interested in you personally or only in your qualifications?
- Are questions clear, intuitive, and posed in ways that generate your interest to know more about this opportunity?

- Are interviewers probing your values?
- Are they placing great emphasis on compensation?
- Are your questions answered honestly and without undue defensiveness?
- Has the organization spelled out the responsibilities and accountabilities of the new security leader?
- Is there a formal written job description?
- Is it clear to you what this company needs from you and the time frame in which they expect you to deliver on goals and objectives?
- Are there human resource professionals within the business who will support your work?
- Is the general culture of the company enthusiastically cooperative rather than unhelpful or careless of business outcomes? What makes you think that way? How can you tell?
- Are day-to-day matters handled with an appropriate level of urgency and professionalism?
- Can you assess or determine the measures, metrics, and processes that the business uses?
- What level of liveliness do employees display, especially in areas such as customer service?
- Are existing security team members and others interested in personal and professional growth?
- Have there been numerous mergers or turnovers in key personnel? Have departmental and executive roles been sorted out in the aftermath of changes?
- Are members of the executive team participating in your interview? Can any of them discuss security with the same enthusiasm as they might speak of sales, marketing, finances, or operations? If not, how do you think security will be prioritized among the other functions of the organization?
- Are policies and procedures clear?
- Is there a well-established security function in place or is this a start-up?
- Has the company delivered consistent and smooth business results, year after year?
- How does the company manage internal communications among its employees?
- What important security issues has the company faced within the last 5 years? How have they been resolved?
- How is the morale of operational managers?



- Do people who work for this corporation take good care of their health? Do they have adequate family and vacation time?
- What about teamwork within departments? Are departments collaborative between each other?
- If travel arrangements were needed, were they well coordinated, or is this a new experience for this company?
- Are follow-up contacts timely?
- How do you feel at a gut level about working for this company?

Immediately after the interview, make extensive notes. The more details you recall, the more clearly you will understand how this business addresses processes. These are a clear indicator of the level of organizational discipline throughout the company, as well as of its commitment to employees. If you join this company, you will mirror and adopt their business processes—or you will spend a great deal of energy in frustration.

Become an observer of people—what they do and how they do it. If this is not a natural attribute, you will need to develop it because it will help you to intuitively understand individual and organizational security practices. It will also be a key to grasping changes that may need to be made very quickly if you join this business. Initially, you will be looking for simple win-win opportunities, so note them as you are being interviewed. If the business wins first with suggestions you make, security will automatically win second. This should be your goal.

Also notice anything that strikes you as sluggish or unresponsive; this tends to be mirrored in how security teams and programs respond to challenges. Given the nature of the work and the small size of most corporate security teams, it is not uncommon for any member of the team to be responding to a customer or to the CEO. Therefore, members of the team need to be able to interact appropriately in a variety of situations. Even the most casual interactions reflect the professionalism, or lack thereof, of the security team.

Seek to avoid business environments in which either your lack of certain skills or the culture presents challenges that do not complement your personal strengths. It is important to identify and build on your natural talents. Doing so makes for a more enjoyable and longer life.

People tend to be happiest with the right amount of challenge—no more, no less. A talented colleague moved from running his own security consulting business back into a major corporation as a high-level manager. He had already been in a similar role with a different global corporation before he began his own business. However, he knew that after being away from the major corporate level, he needed to reenter the profession under the supervision of a senior security executive. Since then, he has had many opportunities to take the top spot, but he realizes the advantages of his current position and the stability it brings to him and his family. I believe he has been very smart about his career choices.

Sometimes, it is wise to forego offers of the top position; many have found value in this and have improved their opportunities for personal growth, as well as long-term professional success. I encourage you to consider only those position descriptions that describe you, your strengths, and your skills. Too many times, I have watched colleagues with excellent backgrounds transition into positions for which they lack skills. They end up losing, and so do their families, and the organizations that hired them. Nothing is more frustrating.

Do your homework before you commit to a new venture. Today, it is possible to use public records to research the history of an executive all the way back to ones' college days. Finding the histories and backgrounds of key leaders is important, as they are the ones you will need to influence. If you know the path they traveled to get where they are, you have a real advantage in communicating with them.

For example, one of my early business leaders came from a family of great achievement, wealth, and status in industry. Educated at a fine university, everyone who worked with him knew who his daddy was. I did my own research. I listened to true insiders who knew this executive personally and professionally. Although he was affluent, at the age of 16, he worked for a summer in a steel mill, sweating in the midst of production in the midst of some coworkers who had never finished high school and others who had experienced run-ins with the law. He learned about hardwork and about treating others as he would want to be treated.

When I met this executive, I was struck by his respect for each individual; his clear focus on carrying out responsibilities until tasks were finished; his personal and professional balance as a human being; his

solid values in every realm; and his ability to entrust others with real responsibility. Getting to know this leader was an important factor in my decision to join his enterprise.

For publicly-traded firms, it will also help your assessment if you can access operating plans, annual reports, and 10-K report for the previous two or three years. Try to grasp both the history and the culture of the organization, especially what has led it to thrive. Here are some other key points:

- Learn as much as possible about those to whom you will report, as well as those who will report to you. Start with raw data that can be found in Google searches and launch out from there.
- Do top executives trust others to lead within their departments? In business, trust is related to the level of direct access you are offered to other executives, and to the scope of responsibility and authority they give you.
- If you join this enterprise, who will be in your corner? This question addresses not only your formal title in the business—vice president, director, etc.—but the titles of those to whom you will report. In general, the higher the executive to whom you report, the more organizational attention and impact you will generate. I have been most successful when I reported to a C-suite executive such as a general counsel or executive vice president for human resources, and when I also had direct access to the chairman and CEO. Strive to report at these levels. Having such relationships open lines of communication which are invaluable, especially if there are layers of operational executives.
- Will leaders let you lead or do they merely want you to manage? I have never joined a group, an agency, an organization, or a business just to manage it. That is not my strength. Although I have managed projects, budgets, activities, investigations, I see management as only one component of leadership. This is an important distinction. By the way, corporations also need good managers. Just be sure you know who you are and convey this in your communication.
- Probably the most challenging business environment for a security leader is one in which the organization has never fully integrated itself. This may apply to staff, operational functions, or both. Nonintegrated structures might work in some environments such as holding companies. However, in traditional top-down companies, or

in those with national or international infrastructures, lack of integration can be disastrous.

- Corporate cultures are diverse; each has its own sense of values. Can you spell out the values that are essential to your personal integrity? How do you live these values in your daily work?
- Does the corporation you are thinking of joining spell out its values? If so, how have they become part of the daily operation of the company? Are there ways in which the company evaluates itself behaviorally on specific criteria? Look for criteria having to do with values and people as well as with finances.
- Is there a solid match between your values and those of the corporation? Your success in an organization depends on the compatibility of your values as they are lived out. Although this sounds simple, sometimes people give years of their lives only to leave disheartened and beaten down. A business environment that does not fit your core beliefs is a career and sometimes a personal killer. It literally can suck the lifeblood out of even the most committed professional.

As you interview, try to get a sense of:

- What won't work for you.
- What may work if the circumstances are well defined and understood up-front.
- What are the aspects of this opportunity that you expect will work for you.

In the match between you and any opportunity:

- What does the organization do, day in and day out, in regard to security?
  - Do not look simply at ethics, values, policies, and procedures statements. If possible make it a point to talk to employees when you are away from those you are meeting with.
  - Look at behaviors and practices—what they do and how they treat employees and other issues on a daily basis.
- Finally, what about your own temperament? Can you be calm in critical situations? Are you willing to put in very long days, and could you do it for say 12–18 months?

The investment in time and energy that you make as you thoroughly explore a company and its leaders before committing to

employment will pay dividends every day of your working life. The questions and reflections in this chapter along with your own research, conversations with trusted mentors, journaling, and quiet reflection should help you to make a thorough reconnaissance of the territory you are entering. If the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, the steps you are taking now are among the most significant of your entire journey. These steps may set your direction for years to come.

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