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The 50 Minute MBA for Information Security Professionals

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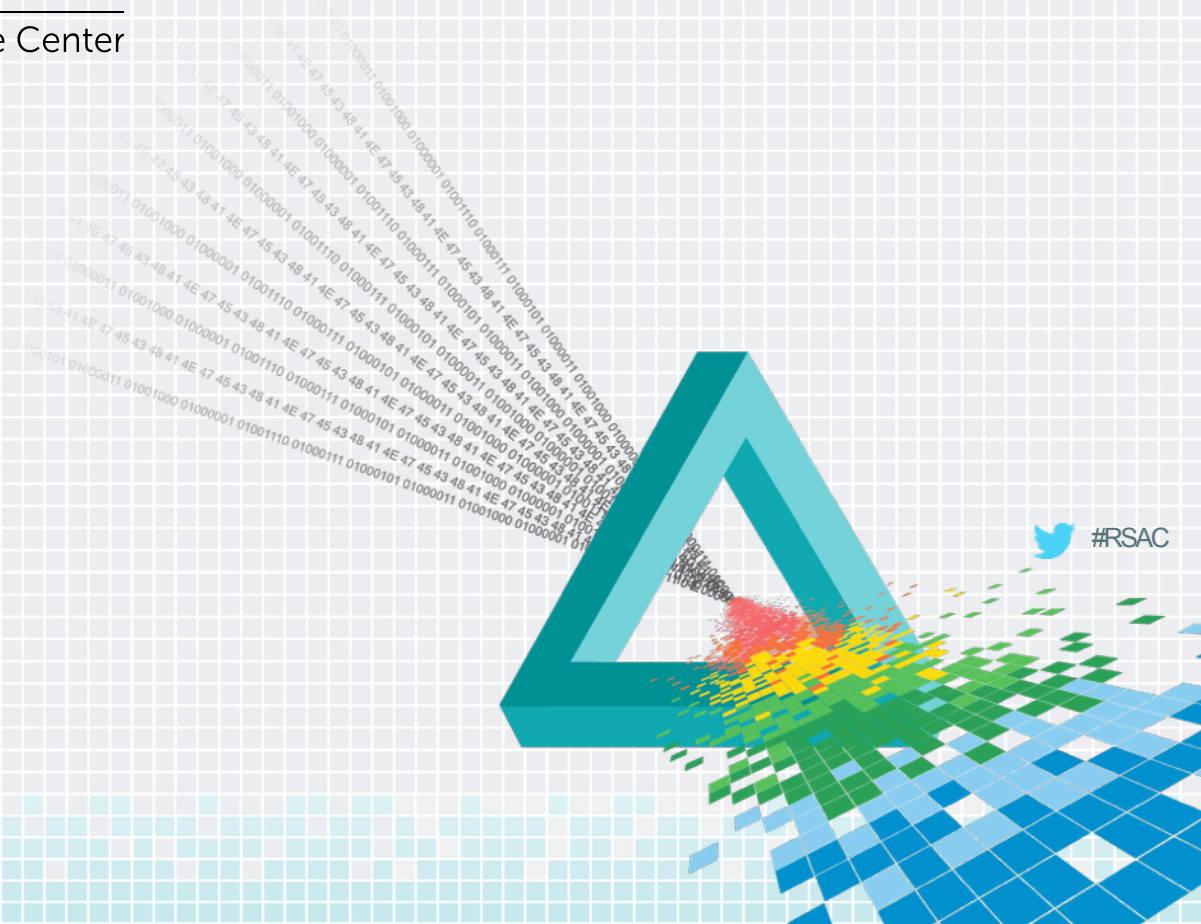
Overview



The Basement isn't for Security Anymore

Words we will try to avoid today

* Business terms (that are actually helpful) will be defined as we go along

Quick note: Academics vs. Practitioners

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Our New Reality

Why should we care about the business?

More info on motivating others: http://brando.ws/CS-Motivation

What's important to others in your company?

- You think security is important
- HR thinks people are important
- Finance thinks dollars are important
- Marketing thinks branding is important
- Sales thinks bookings are important
- IT thinks uptime is important
- CEO thinks his bonus is important (also maybe strategy)

What's ACTUALLY Important AS a business

Providing something of value

That people want

At a price they're willing to pay

That meets their needs and expectations

And is sustainably profitable

How do you learn about business?

Typical Makeup of an MBA

- Covers the following areas:
  - Strategy & Innovation
  - Finance
  - Marketing
  - (Global) Operations
  - Data Analysis & Statistics
  - Leadership & Organizational Behavior
  - Specialization Classes
- Finishes with Capstone project

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Strategy & Innovation

What is Strategy (besides a buzzword)?

- Short and long term planning for the enterprise (Policy)
- Execution of the strategy—details (Procedure)
- Common elements in a strategy:
  - Vision statement / Elevator Pitch
  - What is our business model
  - What makes us different/better
  - What markets will we enter/divest
  - What products will we develop/shelve
  - What are the 3-5 year goals that we must manage to

Strategy: Types and Tools

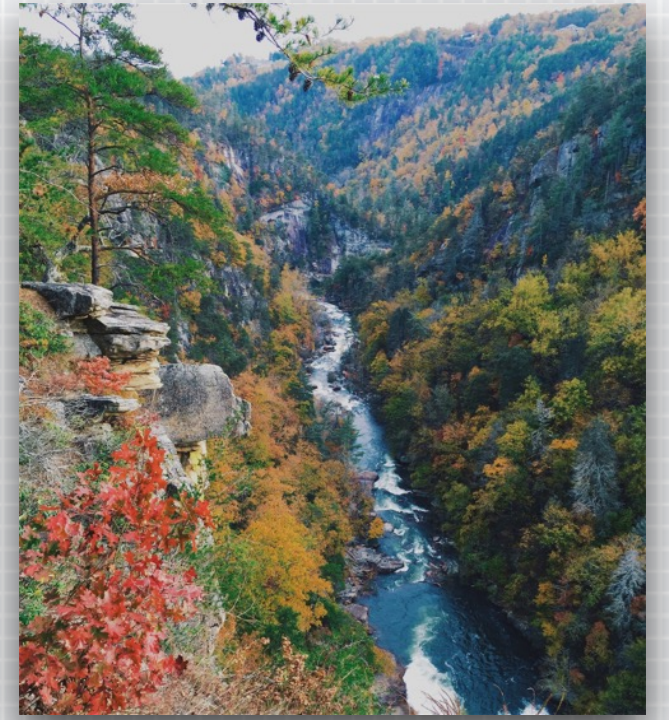
- Generic Corporate Strategies:
  - Low-Cost Provider
  - Broad Differentiation
  - Best-Cost Provider
  - Focused Low-Cost Provider
  - Focused Differentiation
- Tools:
  - Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan)
  - Business Model Canvas (Google it)

Thompson, A., Peteraf, M., Gamble, J., & Strickland, A. J. (2010). Crafting and executing strategy: The quest for competitive advantage (17th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Strategy & Innovation Theories

Strategy (Translating to Security)

- Alignment is KEY!
- The strategy is the current in the center of the river…
- … eddies on the edges cut into flow.
- How to leverage strategy:
  - Ensure your work aligns with corporate strategy
  - Be aware of future-looking statements (planning)
  - As a tool to clarify requests to the InfoSec group



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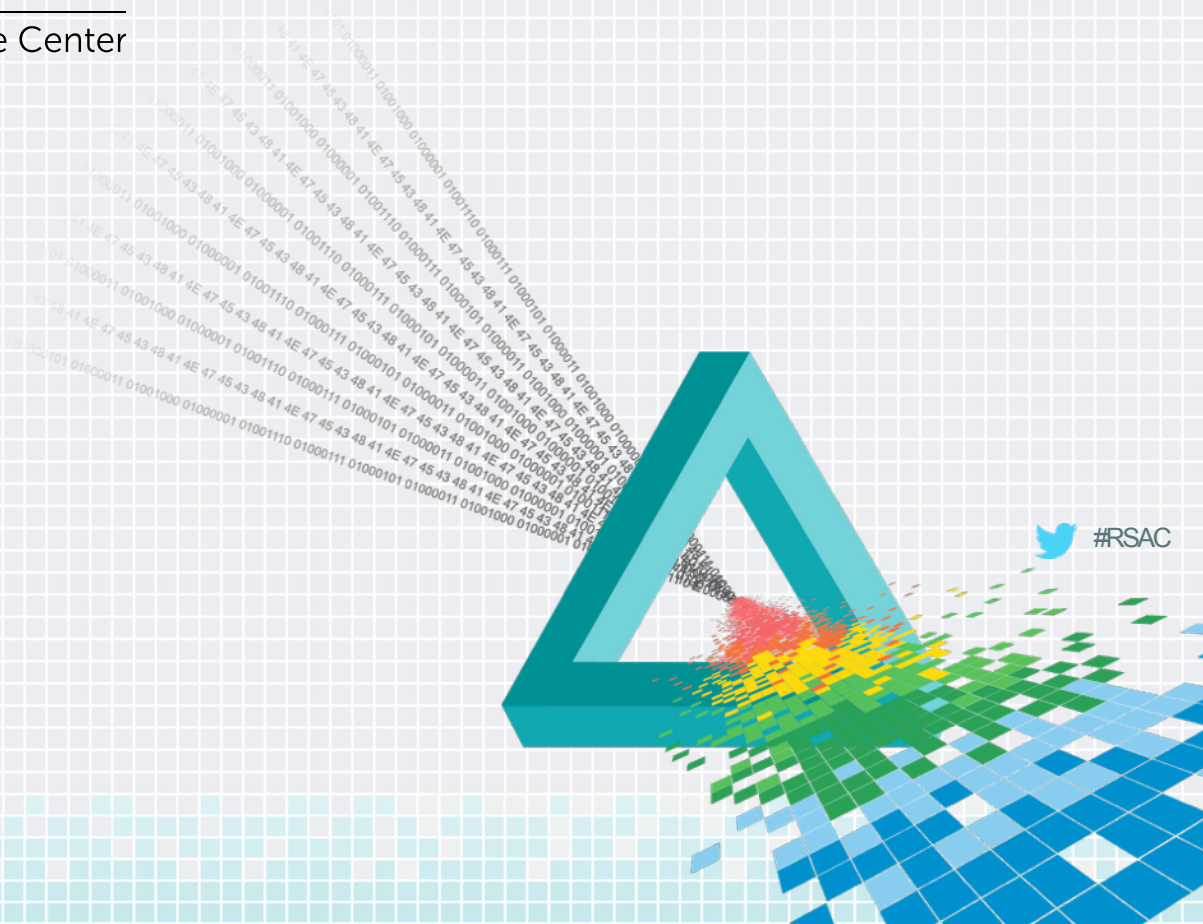
Finance



Finance

- Financial Accounting, Managerial Cost Accounting, Finance 101
- The basics:
  - Investors and owners expect to know where the money goes
  - “For every dollar I give you, I expect you to produce $1.20.” (20%)
- How does this translate?
  - When you ask for $$$ for a project, someone has to find a way to deliver return
  - Perhaps this is why security budget is so hard to come by?

Motivations of Finance People

- What are finance people asked to do?
  - Cut costs to maintain or improve margins
  - Raise funding via equity or debt
  - Assist in models for M&A
  - Balance demands of employees/managers/investors/customers
- What are finance people measured on?
  - Hitting targets
  - Improving financial positions
  - Providing investment funds

Finance (Translating to Security)

- Managers must balance revenue & expense requirements
- Risk management is critically important…
- … and sometimes terribly done (see recent breaches!)
- Beating a dying horse time:
  - Align with the revenue side of the business
  - Be an enabler of business
  - Show how investments in security allow the business to make riskier decisions for better returns

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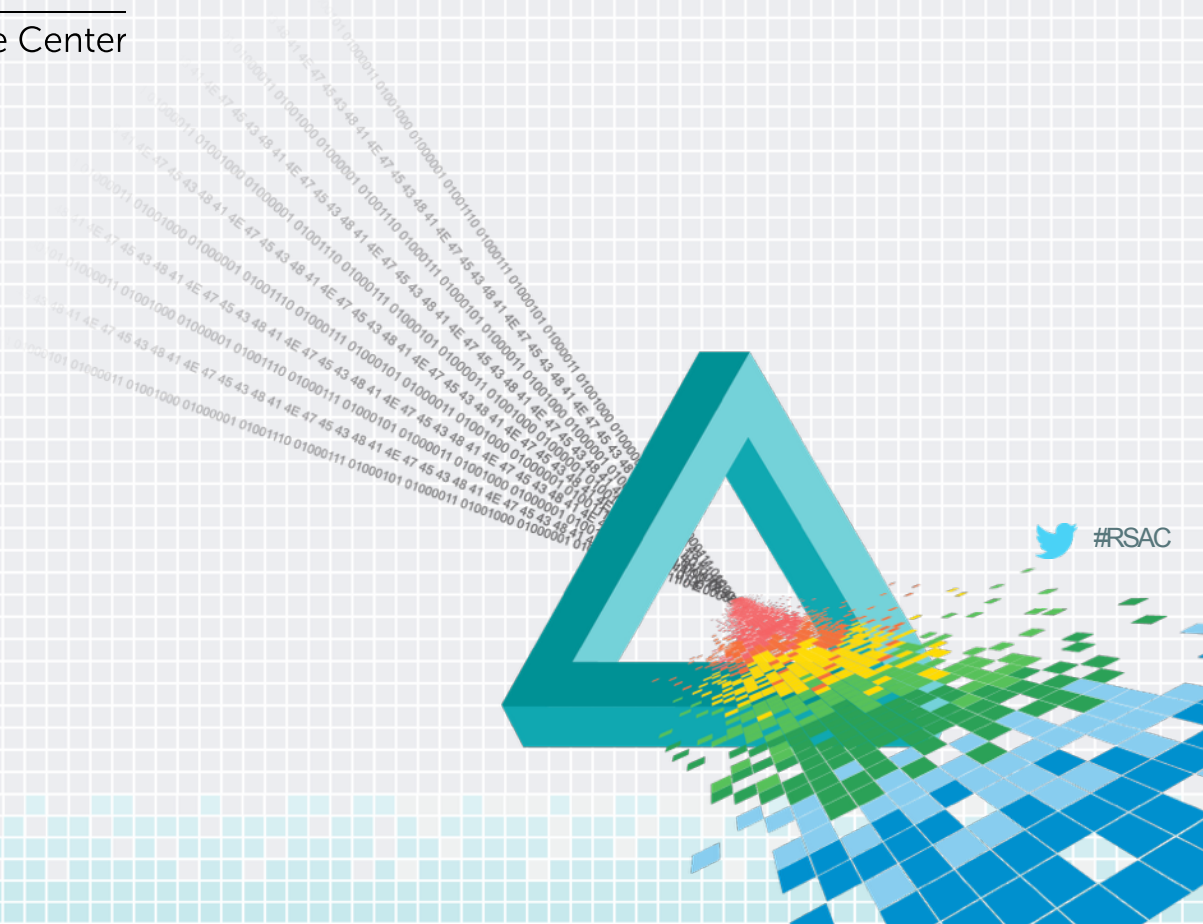
Marketing



Marketing

- In contrast to popular InfoSec tweets, these people have value
- If a business fails in the woods and no customers are around to hear…
- Get the right information to the right people the right way
- This could include tasks such as:
  - Promotion
  - Branding
  - Market segmentation
  - Sales support
  - PR

Motivations of Marketing People

- What are marketing people asked to do?
  - Expand positive brand awareness
  - Assist in market segmentation
  - Generate sales leads
  - Handle messaging and public relations
- What are marketing people measured on?
  - Exposure/Promotion
  - Qualified leads (quantity and quality)
  - Consistent messaging

Marketing (Translating to Security)

- Marketers care about propelling the business forward
- They take liberties with messaging…
- … and sometimes we mock them.
- How to work with them:
  - Promote security as a customer initiative
  - Highlight how it differentiates you in the market
  - Enlist their help with internal education
  - Have them promote your initiative!

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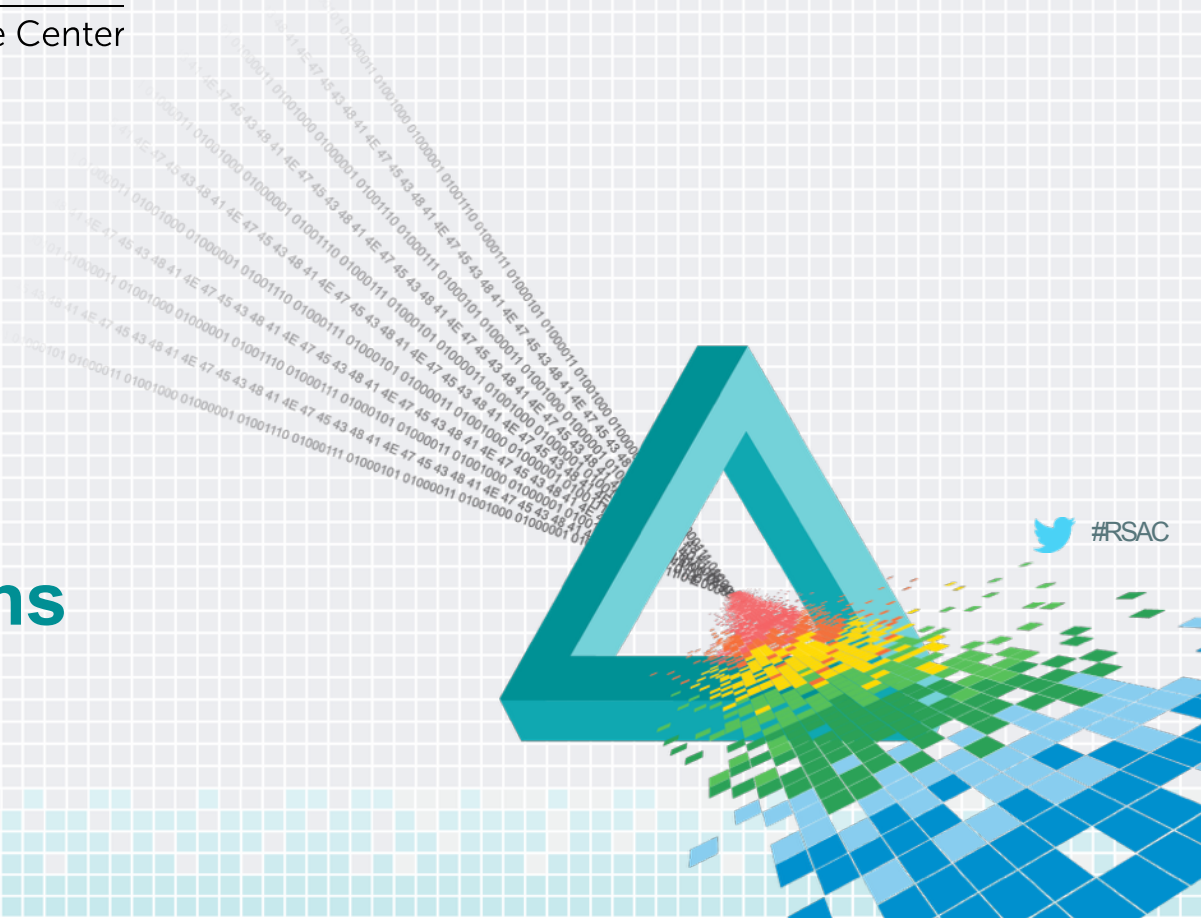
(Global) Operations



(Global) Operations

- Executing on business strategery
- Includes processes that create and deliver the product:
  - Manufacturing/Developing
  - Supplying
  - Production
  - Distribution
- Increasingly includes managing activities in many places+countries
- This can be true of physical products or knowledge work

Motivations of (Global) Operations People

- What are operations people asked to do?
  - Convert materials and labor into goods and services
  - Do so efficiently to maximize profit
- What are operations people measured on?
  - Margin
  - Efficiency
  - Kaizen

(Global) Operations (Translating to Security)

- InfoSec is extremely relevant to operations groups
- Business chooses to open a facility in Manila
  - Infosec needs to perform risk assessment
- Supply chains require info sharing and interconnectedness
  - Monitor what types of data can be shared with who and by what method
- Company starts to allow employees to work remotely every third Friday
  - Enable secure communications via corporate VPN with 2FA

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Data Analysis & Statistics

Data Analysis & Statistics

- ** What word is right? Data-based decision making
- Moving from qualitative to quantitative management
- Companies are collecting more data about more things
  - But they have to figure out what it means, or it's useless
- Technical tools have advanced this practice
  - Excel does a great job
  - SQL can do more
  - Python, R, SAS, SPSS do most

Data Analysis & Statistics (Translating to Security)

- Data here, data there
  - InfoSec should protect data
  - But groups now need to be able to access and use that information
  - Help implement new technologies that can make both happen
- Risk management
  - You can actually now explain to management, in their language, what your efforts will do to reduce corporate exposure to risk
- Advanced security analytics
  - Identify threats nearer to real time
  - Better than discovering you've been breached for 15 months

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Leadership & Organizational Behavior

Leadership & Organizational Behavior

- People are weird.
- People know when they are being studied.
- People are great.
- People suck.
- Whether we like it or not, we have to work with people.
- This area of study has very rich literature with many studies:
  - Hawthorne Effect
  - Halo Effect
  - Bias

What do students learn here?

- Lots of soft skills here:
  - Interpersonal skills
  - Conflict resolution
  - Leadership skills
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Relationship building
  - Negotiation
- All the stuff that technology pros scoff at but could be the most valuable skills in your toolbelt

Ethics

or

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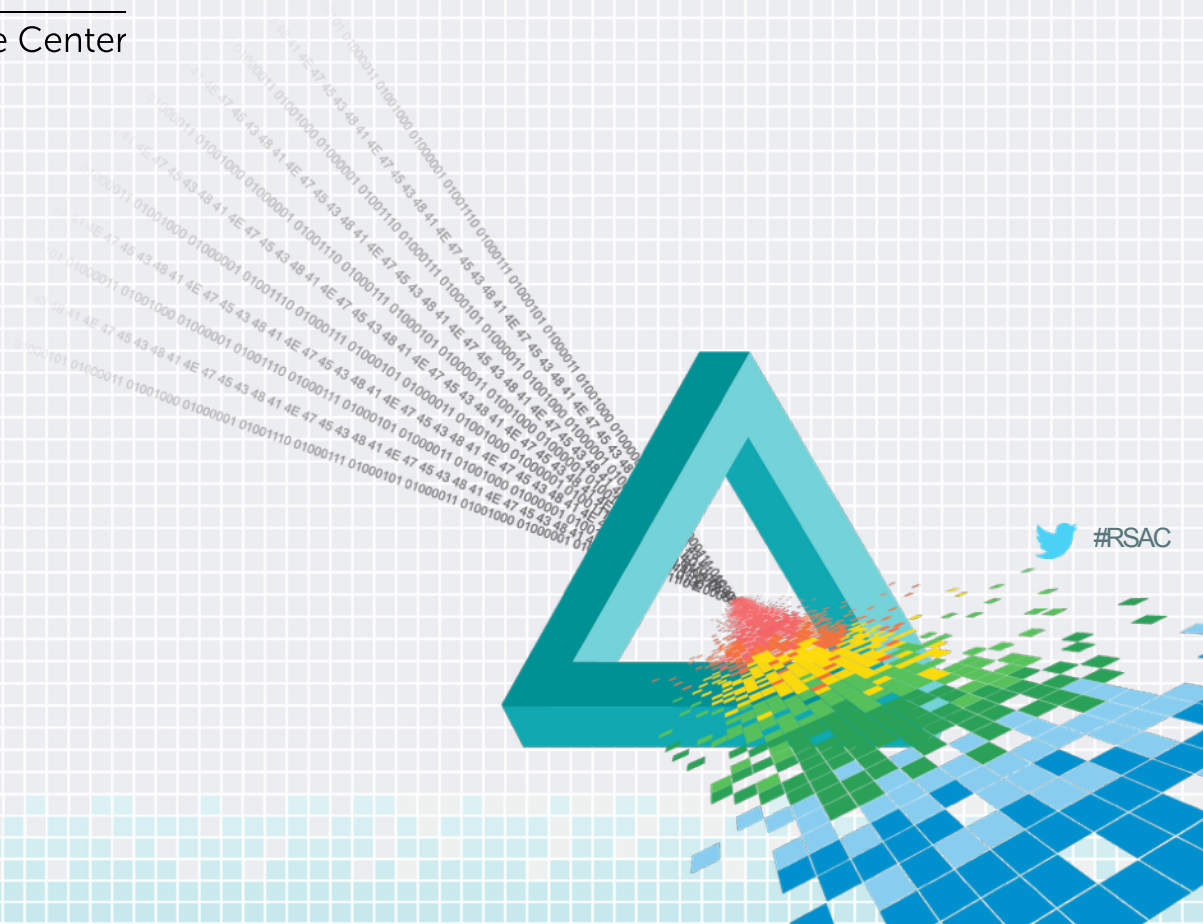
Apply



Apply What You Have Learned Today

- Immediate actions
  - Identify the other groups in your business and the value they provide
  - Understand how individuals in these groups are rewarded (goals)
  - Locate and digest your business's strategy (and how it is executed)
- Actions to implement within 3 months of returning to the office
  - Put down the IT book, pick up a business book (See references)
  - Review of current infosec initiatives to check for alignment
  - Plan to align future security projects with business

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Questions?

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