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Cyber workforce's mental health: a brighter future

By Shamla Naidoo, Strategy Office, Netskope



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As we look back on Mental Health Awareness Month, it is the ideal time to reflect on how well your organisation is doing in raising awareness of - and reducing the stigma around - mental illness and promoting healthy working environments. The cybersecurity industry has been subject to mental health challenges in high-pressure environments for decades and it's important that, collectively as an industry, cybersecurity leaders and professionals continue to work towards these goals with greater strength and cohesion.

Cybersecurity roles typically involve high expectations, high stakes, and high stress. Day-to-day, security teams grapple with constant attacks and incoming alerts notifying teams of potential breaches and suspicious activity that each require clear, informed and rapid responses. At every turn, failure looms, the result of which could place the entire operational capacity of a company at

risk. No matter your level of experience or the sector, cybersecurity is a taxing environment that naturally leads to unusual amounts of stress and, unfortunately, mental health issues.

To add fuel to the fire, unprecedented macroeconomic events have triggered surges of threat actor activity over the past few years, exacerbating issues for cybersecurity practitioners. The pandemic accelerated the trend toward remote corporate access and led many more consumers to embrace online shopping, leaving companies and private networks under strain and vulnerable to threat. Compounding issues, the war in Ukraine caused Russian-based attackers and hacktivists to ramp up cyber operations globally. After years of compromise and disruption, it's hardly surprising that 64% of cybersecurity professionals find their work is taking a toll on their mental health, according to a recent study.

Where do we go from here?

The first building block in any form of cultural change is raising awareness. Normalising mental health issues will ultimately create a safer space for security professionals to air concerns and admit when they are struggling, without fear of personal or professional repercussions. The benefit of creating such an environment is invaluable, allowing employees to feel less isolated in their issues and for employers to spot risks before they impact output too heavily. As many C-suite executives are unaware of the nature of security roles, change must come from the top. I urge CIOs and CISOs, and other senior decision makers in cybersecurity, to educate their fellow executives and advocate for their security teams, reducing the barriers to engagement and awareness.

Confronting mental health challenges in the cybersecurity industry also requires employers to improve or implement safeguards for staff. Once the level of everyday pressure and subsequent stresses are recognised by the C-suite, a tangible, accessible support system must be put in place to prevent spikes in mental health challenges. Stigma can be rapidly reduced by increasing positive, inclusive messaging, providing regular workload reviews, responding to employee feedback and setting aside budget for one-to-one and group support programmes. Ideally, support programmes would not take too much time away from work so as to not induce a stress response in itself.

A well rounded support programme should equip staff with everyday tools they can rely upon when work stress begins to peak, helping to reduce pain points before they become a problem. Stress management and relief varies from person to person, so there is value in demonstrating a range of activities to your workforce. Popular coping tools include walking in nature, mindfulness meditation, spending time with friends, daily reflections and a good sleep schedule, all allowing people to reset in some small way before the new workday begins.

Stress and burnout significantly impairs work ability, so promoting a good mental health culture in the workplace benefits both employees and the businesses themselves. By improving mental wellbeing, the cybersecurity industry can benefit from reduced staff churn, more effective decision

making and, most importantly, happier and healthier staff. Cybersecurity professionals are then more able to do what they do best, improving the security posture of an organisation and leading to a safer ecosystem for all.

Video of The Week

Explore some related information to above article at following link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6lLi1V-6Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZGTisHPFic>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9LRh1oJXOQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpdcVfq2dB8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxRX2u0Bk2g>

News of The Week

How Much is India's 'Digital Economy' Worth?

In a First, Modi Govt to Measure it in Next 9 Months

Before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Centre has decided to put a figure to the size of India's 'digital economy', number of jobs created under 'Digital India', provide a five-year projection and assess its impact on key segments like e-commerce.

The Narendra Modi-led central government, for the first time, will measure the size of India's 'digital economy'. So far, only agencies do this while a Google report recently projected India to be a \$1-trillion 'digital economy' by 2030.

Now, the Centre before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections has decided to put a figure to the size of this 'digital economy', number of jobs created under it since the launch of the 'Digital India' in 2015, provide a five-year projection and assess its impact on specific segments like e-commerce.

News18 accessed a government document on this. The government has put prime focus on 'digitalisation' but the measurement of the 'digital economy' has not been institutionalised in India. Sectoral agencies and participants do not capture or report data, which directly relates to the value add on account of digital technologies.

Hence, the government now wants to capture and showcase the impact that the 'Digital India' programme has had on the digital profile of the country since 2015. Projections will also be made from 2023-24 till 2029-30, officials said.

HOW WILL THE GOVERNMENT MEASURE THE 'DIGITAL ECONOMY'?

According to senior officials, an exercise will be conducted over the next nine months involving “estimation and measurement of India’s digital economy”, including formulation of measurement framework, capturing data and identifying digital interventions. This will also involve a thorough review of the existing literature and methodologies on the digital economy measurement frameworks across the globe and find a robust framework and methodology suitable for India, the officials told *News18*.

Officials said this exercise will also identify gaps in data in estimating the size of India’s digital economy, provide suitable policy recommendations for boosting its size and growth as well as identify suitable pathways for focus sectors that will augment its size by 2030.

India is seen among the world’s fastest growing digital economies, driven by digital payments and the use of UPI (Unified Payments Interface).

ANALYSING IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE KEY PART OF EXERCISE

Officials further said a key part will be to capture the impact of e-commerce and emerging technologies on the digital economy. The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) had published a report on ‘India’s Trillion Dollar Digital Opportunity’ in 2019.

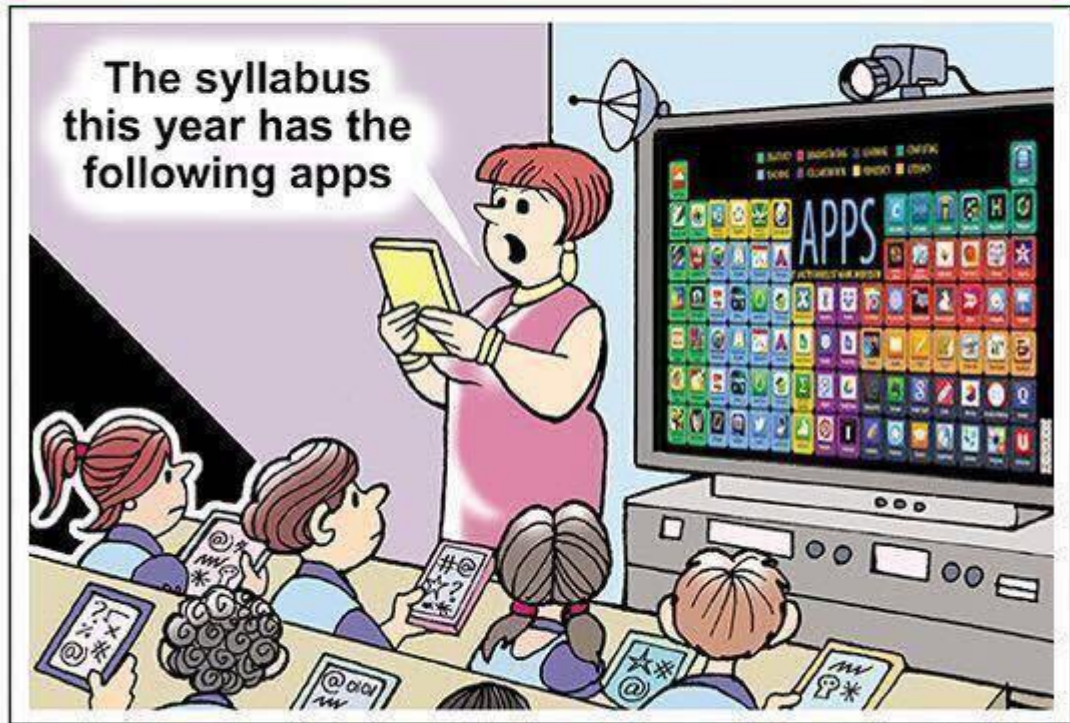
The government believes that the ‘Digital India’ programme has put India on a digital roadmap and achieved inclusion and empowerment of citizens, expansion of the digital economy, jobs, entrepreneurship and investments. It has led to the emergence of India as a global leader in technology with growing capabilities in scalable public digital platforms, fintech, digital infrastructure and electronics.

“India’s digital transformation necessitates the analysis of different drivers of digital economy (like electronics, IT/ITeS, skilling, etc), their contribution in the overall digital economy of India and establishment of mechanisms to track the progress of key performance indicators across these categories,” the government document states.

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Sunil Agarwal & Ajit Ninan



The Times of India

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