Adeptis

Connecting Talent, Securing the Future

Why People Leave – Insights for Building and Retaining Robust Cyber Security Teams

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Introduction: Unlocking the Code to Talent Retention in Cybersecurity

In the dynamic realm of cybersecurity, where innovation races against threats, the demand for skilled professionals has reached unprecedented heights. Remarkably, one in four cybersecurity experts receives enticing job opportunities every week, with a staggering 70% falling under the category of "passively looking." In a landscape where talent is both the shield and the sword, comprehending the intricate web of challenges and motivations leading to employee departures is not just advantageous – it is imperative.

This white paper delves into rich industry data, we illuminate the path, revealing the common challenges that businesses face in retaining their cyber guardians. In This white paper learn actionable strategies meticulously designed to build and fortify robust cybersecurity teams.

As the cyber ecosystem continues to evolve, so do the expectations and aspirations of the professionals within it. To navigate this landscape successfully, organisations must not only understand the factors prompting skilled individuals to explore new opportunities but also equip themselves with the knowledge and tools to keep their cybersecurity talent engaged, fulfilled, and loyal.

Join us on this exploration as we dissect the complexities of talent retention, decode the motivations behind workforce dynamics, and pave the way for organisations to not only weather the storm of industry challenges but emerge as beacons of resilience and excellence in cybersecurity.

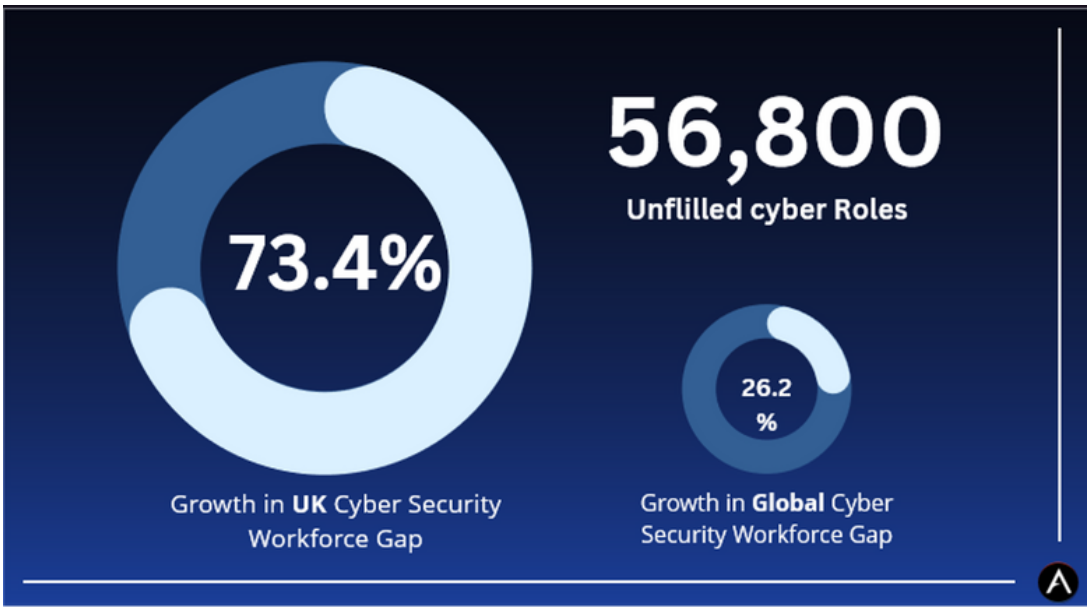
Contents

Industry Challenges

The landscape of cybersecurity is marked by challenges that demand a vigilant response from organisations. One of the most pressing concerns is the looming workforce and skills shortages, ranking as the second most significant challenge over the next two years. The scarcity of skilled professionals poses a threat to the industry's resilience in the face of evolving cyber threats. As organisations grapple with the need for highly specialised talents, the competition for skilled cybersecurity professionals intensifies, further exacerbating the challenge.

The demand for cybersecurity expertise is vividly illustrated by the staggering number of job postings. In the past year alone, the UK witnessed a surge with 153,192 new Cyber Security Job Postings. This substantial figure underscores the sustained demand for cybersecurity professionals, painting a picture of an industry in constant need of skilled individuals. The increasing volume of job postings not only reflects the demand but also highlights the industry's dynamic nature, where opportunities abound for those equipped with the right skills and knowledge.

1 in 4 industry professionals being approached at least once a week with one or more relevant opportunities



On average 70% of the market are classified as "passively looking"

once a "passive candidate" starts looking they are up to 80% more likely to consider multiple opportunities

Analysis of average tenure within the cybersecurity field reveals an intriguing correlation between the demand for technical security staff and retention rates. In environments where the demand for specialised skills is high, we observe a parallel trend of reduced average tenures. This correlation emphasises the challenges organisations face in retaining technical talent, hinting at a competitive environment where professionals may be enticed by new opportunities in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Beyond the quantitative measures, there exists a qualitative challenge related to the dynamics of cybersecurity leadership. The role of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) is crucial, yet the average tenure stands at a mere 1.5 years. This brief duration is attributed to factors such as burnout, lack of board buy-in, or CISOs seeking alternative employment. The departure of a CISO can trigger uncertainty within the team, subsequently increasing the likelihood of other members seeking alternative opportunities. Navigating the delicate balance of leadership stability remains a formidable challenge for organisations aiming to build enduring cybersecurity teams.

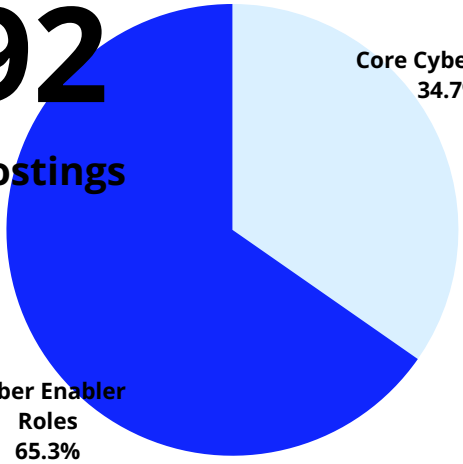
In summary, the challenges faced by the cybersecurity industry extend beyond mere workforce shortages. They encompass a competitive landscape fueled by sustained demand, nuanced correlations between technical roles and retention rates, and the imperative to establish stable leadership to ensure the long-term cohesion of cybersecurity teams.

Reasons for Employee Departures

Research from industry reports indicates that individuals seek new opportunities primarily due to growth opportunities and negative work culture. The demand for flexible working conditions, coupled with high levels of burnout, contributes to the decision-making process. Notably, 13% of surveyed individuals left the industry altogether, emphasising the impact of negative work culture on talent retention.

153,192

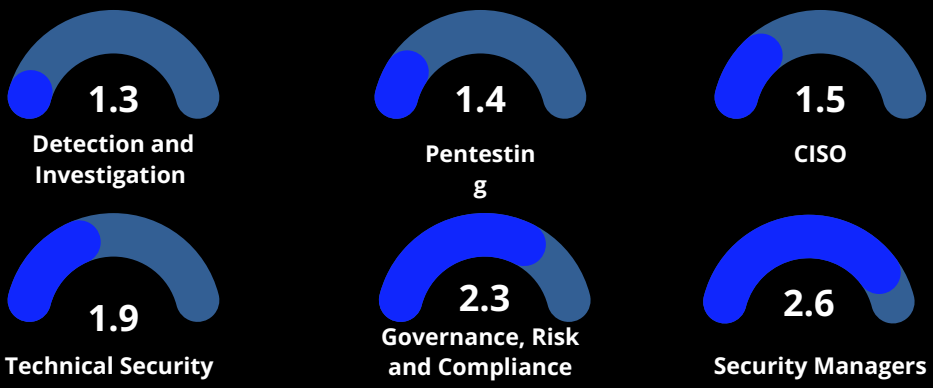
Cyber Security Job Postings



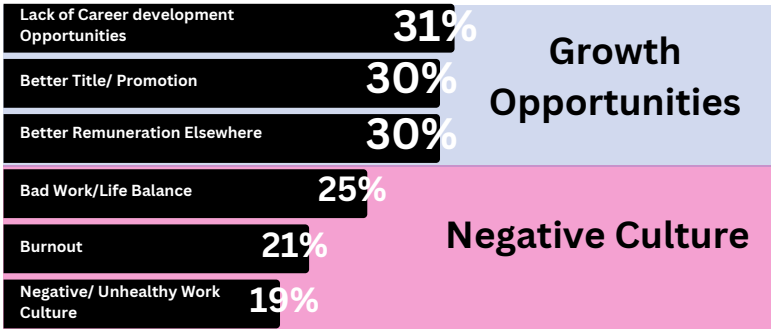
Core Cyber Roles:
Encompass key positions responsible for safeguarding computer systems, networks, and data from cyber threats, including security analysts, ethical hackers, incident responders, security engineers, security architects and SOC analysts.

Cyber Enabler Role: Roles that are not formally recognised as cyber roles but still require cyber-related skills. They include aspects and functions of cyber roles. E.g. Project Management, Risk Assessment, Network Engineering.

Median Industry Tenure (Years)

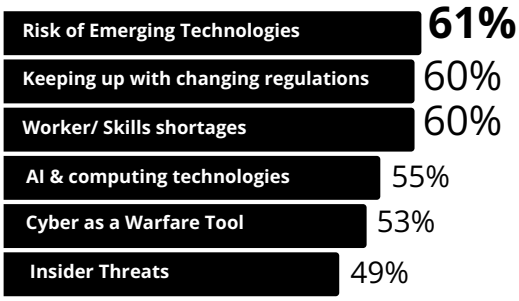


Why do People Leave?



Biggest Challenges

For Cyber security Industry over the next 2 years



Remote Work Dynamics

The transformative impact of the pandemic on the global workforce is most evident in the paradigm shift toward remote work. The adaptation to remote working practices, necessitated by the pandemic, has not only become a defining feature of the post-pandemic era but has also reshaped employee expectations. An astonishing 22% of the global workforce has embraced a hybrid working approach, a substantial increase from the 12% recorded pre-pandemic. This seismic shift underscores the heightened desire for flexibility in work arrangements, with companies offering remote and hybrid roles gaining a competitive edge in attracting and retaining top talent.

Percentage of the UK workforce that adopt a Hybrid approach

22%
Present Day

12%
Pre-Pandemic

The surge in the adoption of hybrid working models is not merely a response to external circumstances; it is a direct reflection of the changing priorities of the workforce. This evolution is evidenced by the CIPD Good Work Index, which surveyed more than 6,000 UK workers. The findings reveal that 24% of respondents are actively seeking better work-life balance, citing changing personal circumstances and a desire to enhance their home life. As the desire for flexibility intensifies, businesses recognising and capitalising on this trend gain a strategic advantage in attracting and retaining skilled professionals.

In the contemporary professional landscape, the term "remote jobs" is now a recurring theme, with over 18,000 searches per month. This growing interest signifies not only a preference for remote work but also a willingness of individuals to explore new opportunities that align with their evolving preferences. While this increased visibility opens avenues for talent acquisition, it simultaneously poses a challenge for organisations seeking to retain remote talent. If businesses fail to prioritise the well-being and needs of their remote workforce, individuals are now more empowered than ever to explore alternative roles, given the ease of virtual engagement.

The emphasis on remote work dynamics extends beyond a mere response to external factors; it is a strategic imperative for organisations aiming to secure their position in a talent-driven market. As the demand for flexible work arrangements continues to surge, companies must proactively address the evolving needs of their workforce to ensure not only talent retention but also sustainable organisational success in the new era of work.

Impact on Salaries

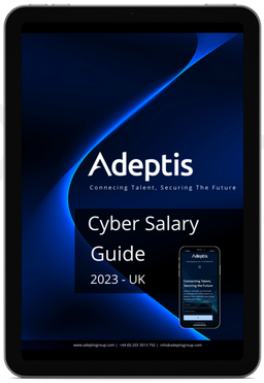
In response to the ever-increasing competition for top-tier security talent, the industry has witnessed rapid growth in compensation rates. Reports reveal a substantial uptick in salaries, particularly in high-demand domains such as Incident Response, Identity and Access Management (IAM), and Offensive Security, with an average increase of up to 10.8% observed throughout the course of 2021 to 2022.

This trend is indicative of the intensely competitive nature of the cybersecurity job market. Incident Response, IAM, and Offensive Security, being crucial pillars of cybersecurity, have become focal points for organisations seeking to bolster their defenses against evolving threats. The substantial salary hikes in these areas underscore the urgency for companies to address compensation concerns if they intend to attract and, more crucially, retain top-tier talent amidst fierce industry competition.

Moreover, the surge in salaries is not confined solely to the domains of Incident Response, IAM, and Offensive Security. The broader spectrum of security verticals, including Security Governance, Risk, Compliance, and Audit, has experienced notable growth as well. Specifically, salaries in these areas have recorded a commendable increase of 6.6%, further illustrating the widespread impact of the demand for cybersecurity skills on remuneration structures across the industry.

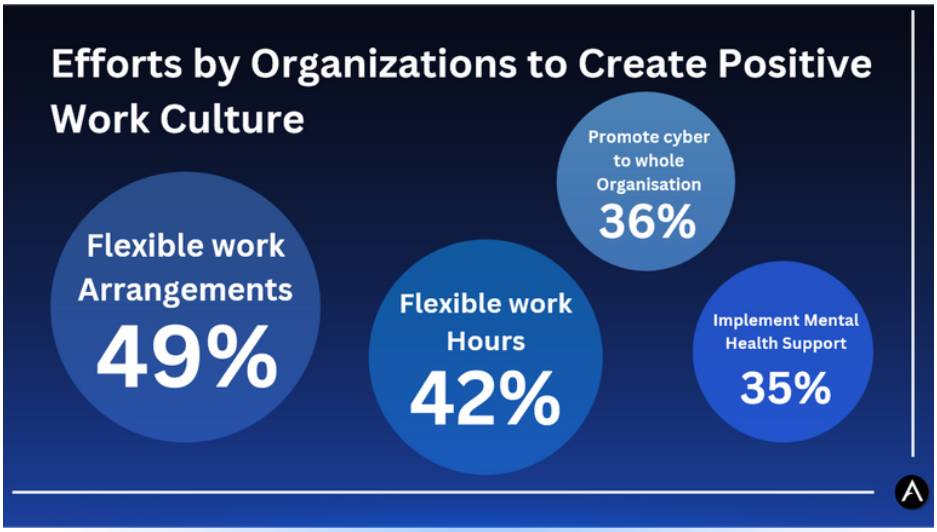
As organisations grapple with the challenge of retaining their cybersecurity professionals in this highly competitive environment, it becomes imperative to recognise and respond to the multifaceted nature of compensation concerns. Understanding these nuances is crucial for organisations seeking to navigate the intricate landscape of talent retention and remain at the forefront of the ever-evolving cybersecurity domain.

Download our 2023 Salary Survey



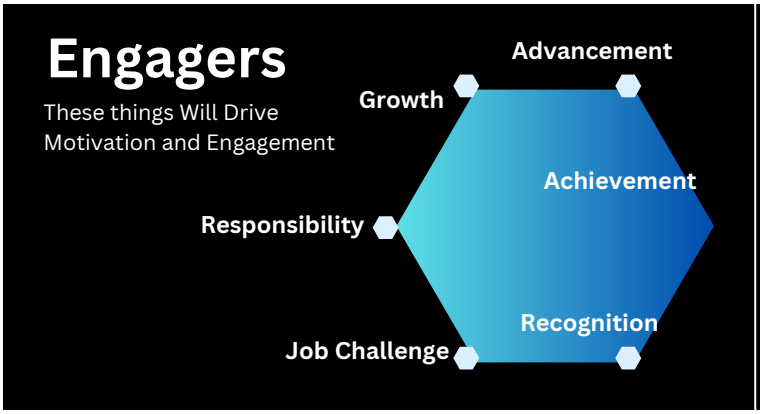
Employee Engagement and Culture

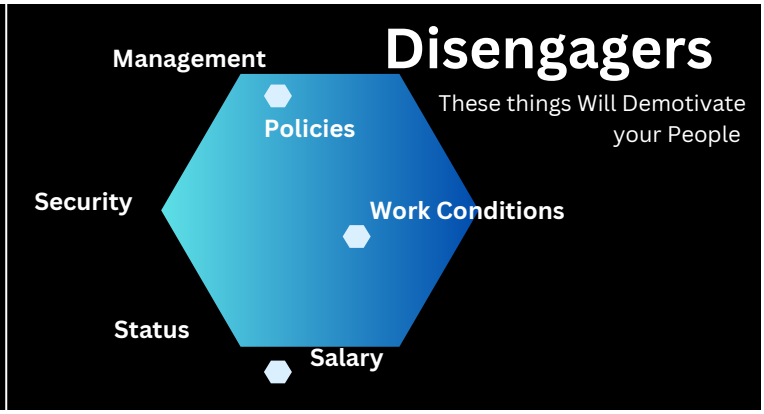
Employee engagement is critical for retention. A decline in employees feeling valued at work is evident, with 1 in 2 employees feeling "somewhat valued," and 1 in 10 not feeling valued at all. A positive company culture significantly influences both employee retention and recruitment. Establishing a strong identity and purpose within a remote work environment is a new challenge.



> **"In the employee exodus, culture speaks loudest—our data shows one in three leaves due to a lack thereof. Echoed by Glassdoor, where 77% consider culture in job decisions, and two-thirds stay for a positive culture. Crafting a great remote culture is a challenge, but thriving security teams prove it's possible. CISO insights reveal the need to forge purpose and identity, transcending mere alignment with business culture."**
>
> *Ryan Virani - Adeptis Group*

The seismic shift to remote work, accelerated by the pandemic, has fundamentally altered employee expectations, with 22% of the global workforce now embracing a hybrid model. Companies offering remote and hybrid roles gain a competitive advantage, but the surge in interest also highlights the critical need to prioritise the well-being of remote teams, as evidenced by the 24% of UK workers seeking improved work-life balance. In this context, the term "remote jobs" is searched over 18,000 times monthly, emphasising the imperative for businesses to proactively adapt to the evolving preferences of their workforce to secure talent retention and organisational success.





To foster engagement, organisations must proactively assess their current processes, initiating both scheduled and spontaneous conversations around these pivotal topics. Conversely, overlooking these critical elements can lead to disengagement, a challenge often underestimated by organisations. Many assume that having these components in place automatically renders them attractive to the workforce. In reality, these factors are not differentiators but expectations. Failure to monitor and engage in conversations about employees' sentiments in these areas can directly contribute to disengagement.

Regular reviews of employee perspectives on their status, work conditions, policies, and compensation are crucial. Establishing a structured framework for these discussions, ideally every three months, ensures a proactive approach to discover and address potential areas of disengagement.

Strategies for Retention

Successful retention strategies encompass various focal points, including fostering flexible work arrangements, conducting regular salary reviews, providing robust mental health support, promoting open communication, and tailoring leadership approaches based on a nuanced understanding of individual motivations. Additionally, prioritising professional development opportunities and creating a supportive work environment that values diversity contribute significantly to enhancing overall employee satisfaction and commitment.

Quick Wins

Investment and Training

Speaking with Employees (Feedback)

Salary Review Meetings

Exit Interviews

Regular bench marking exercises

Defining a common mission

Beyond the foundational pillars of retention, organisations can further elevate their employee experience by actively investing in professional development opportunities. Enabling skill growth and career advancement not only bolsters the workforce's capabilities but also signals a commitment to individual growth. Moreover, organisations that foster a culture of continuous learning create an environment where employees feel valued and engaged.

In addition to professional development, a supportive work environment that champions diversity and inclusivity stands as a cornerstone of effective retention. Embracing diverse perspectives and backgrounds not only enhances creativity and innovation but also fosters a sense of belonging among employees. When individuals feel valued for their unique contributions and experiences, it significantly contributes to a positive workplace culture and reinforces their commitment to the organisation. By consistently championing these values, organisations can fortify their retention efforts and position themselves as employers of choice in a competitive talent landscape.

Conclusion

This white paper serves as a strategic guide, navigating the intricacies of talent retention on the digital frontier. Beyond shedding light on factors influencing employee departures, it provides actionable strategies, empowering organisations to strengthen their cybersecurity teams.

As we delve into the nuanced landscape of the industry, this paper doesn't just offer insights; it equips businesses with practical wisdom.

It's a call not just to adapt but to architect environments that not only attract attention but also retain the brightest minds. Unlocking these insights empowers organisations to cultivate a future where cybersecurity is more than just a practice; it's a dynamic culture—a culture that draws in, engages, and retains top talent. In this blend of knowledge and strategy lies the key to enduring success amidst the dynamic challenges of the cybersecurity domain.

> **“In the tapestry of talent retention, our key findings weave a narrative of strategic resilience. From fostering flexible cultures to championing diversity, and investing in continuous growth, organisations hold the brush to paint a vibrant canvas of commitment. As we conclude, let us remember: the art of retention lies not just in policies but in the profound connection between organisations and their most valuable asset—their people.”**
>
> *Hubert Colvin - Managing Director Adeptis Group*

Contact Us

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