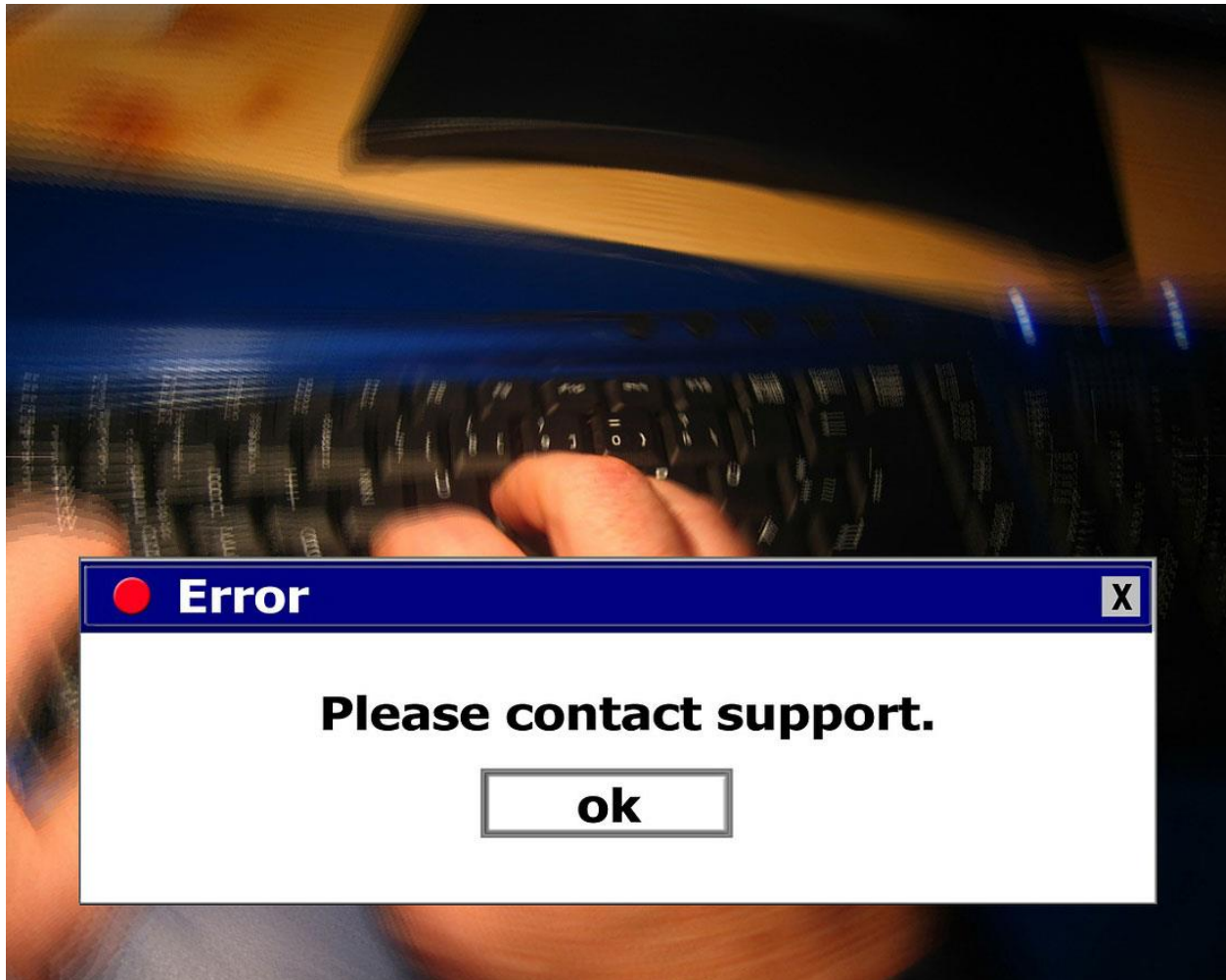


5 Massive Infosec Career Mistakes

(and how to avoid them ...)



Woody Allen famously said that “80% of success is simply showing up.”

There is a lot of truth to that statement, and I’m going to add that you not only need to show up but you also need to avoiding screwing up!

While we all make mistakes (how many failed experiments did Edison need before he produced a practical electric light bulb?), we want to avoid making major mistakes for extended periods of time.

Many of us have and will continue to make the major mistakes that follow; I certainly have!

If you recognize them, you can correct your course sooner rather than later.

Make sure you review what you’re doing periodically as what may be a wise course today may be a foolish choice tomorrow.

The world, and especially our field, is changing rapidly!



1) Not Specializing

Quick, who is smarter, a brain surgeon or a general practitioner?

Our gut reaction is always that a specialist is smarter than a generalist (even though any one particular brain surgeon may not be as smart as your average general practitioner).

Specialists are seen as experts, and experts absolutely tend to be paid more, are respected more, and have more influence.

When you add that the field of infosec is exploding in breadth and no one can do everything well:

You absolutely need to specialize.

Although 25 years ago being a “Computer Security Dude” (or “Dudette”) was massively specializing, it certainly isn’t today.

There are in demand specializations that didn’t exist not long ago, such as Android Pentesters, HIPAA Consultants, iPhone Forensic Analysts and more, and there will be need for additional specialists in areas which we can’t even yet imagine in the near future.

Although you want a broad base of knowledge, you need to specialize and you need to revisit your specialization regularly!



2) Specializing Too Much

In 1990, I tried to specialize too much, and I was that “Computer Security Dude.”

Although there was work, I also had to do other things to help pay the bills.

Today, as mentioned, that would be not specializing enough.

What if today you decided to be a “Car Forensics Person?” Cars and other vehicles have dozens of processors, memory, and create and store data that may be very valuable in criminal and civil cases and more.

As I write this now, this would simply be too much of a specialization, just like being a “Computer Security Dude” was in 1990. It may not be in a few years (or possibly even months) but it is today. Maybe, just maybe, the car manufacturers have a few dedicated car forensics people, but I doubt even that today.

Maybe if car forensics is your passion you could be a forensics person who does as much car forensics as possible?

Specialize, but not too deeply, and maintain a broad base of security knowledge and expertise.



3) Being Too Intense and Not Having Other Interests

We tend to be a pretty intense group and that is wonderful, although not without potential problems.

It is possible to be too intense, for example working 100 days straight while not sleeping enough or working endless 80+ hour weeks – I've done both!

A number of potential problems can arise and ruin our effectiveness and our lives.

Burn Out – I've burnt out before. I ended up taking most of a year off, and sometimes if successful and in a well paid field we can do this or something similar, however I lost contacts, clients started using other people, and although I kept up technically, I **absolutely lost my edge**. It's awesome I could take the time off, but being burnt out is NOT good!



Health – When I get too intense for too long **my health suffers**. I start eating too much convenient and generally unhealthy food, I am far less physically active, and my mental health, stress levels, and more suffer big time.

Sound familiar? I'm certainly not alone in these issues!

Relationships – **Relationships suffer if they exist at all**. There are people that barely have relationships with their family because they are off working all the time. There are single people remaining single in part because of (often self imposed) nearly endless work.

4) Getting Sidetracked

Life happens, and even really cool things can derail us.

I helped a friend with the business side of his gym, wrote two books on social media, and have put up web sites on fly fishing and more.

Although it is great that I could help a friend in need with his business, it's really cool that a literary agent magically materialized with book contracts, and that I have other passions in life, you do not want other professional and other interests to take over.

If Infosec is your passion, like it is mine, and you want to succeed wildly, however you personally define success, you stick with it.

Certainly pursue other interests, personally and professionally, but don't let them derail you!



5) Concentrating Only on Technology

When I was younger, my career ambitions were to become more and more technical, more geek, because what could be more important?

Technical skills are critical, but there are other skills that are EQUALLY important in infosec.



You might be the biggest, baddest geek on the planet, but if you can't communicate well with others, are incapable of working in a team, have such non-existent time and project management skills that you rarely finish anything and never on time, and are so obnoxious that no one wants to deal with you, well ...

At InfosecRockStar.com we concentrate on the non-technical skills needed to excel in Infosec.

Hey, I may have written a hundred thousand lines of code, can talk about crypto in detail for a couple of days cold, and did pentesting before the word "pentesting" existed, but geek only got me so far.