MeriTalk
Improving the Outcomes of Government IT

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IT'S TIME FOR A POST-SOLARWINDS MAKEOVER SAY 76 PERCENT OF CDM STAKEHOLDERS

Cyber pros embrace zero-trust architecture as key to preventing future attacks

Alexandria, Va., April 26, 2021 – Ninety-three percent of Federal and industry Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) stakeholders say the SolarWinds breach is a catalyst for rethinking Federal cybersecurity, and more than three-quarters call for a CDM makeover, according to *CDM: More Critical Than Ever*, a new study from MeriTalk, a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT.

While the vast majority (78 percent) of stakeholders agree that the SolarWinds breach increased the importance of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) CDM program, only 20 percent give the program an "A" for its ability to help agencies build network resilience after a breach. There is strong consensus for change, with a focus on prioritizing network security management, identity and access management, and data quality and protection.

Building on MeriTalk's November 2020 "CDM Defending HVAs" study, this report features insights from 100 Federal and industry stakeholders as they evaluate the CDM program's current standing and explore recommendations for agency defenses. CDM, launched in 2012, provides cybersecurity tools, integration services, and dashboards to help Federal agencies improve their security posture.

Where's the Disconnect and What's Next?

Consistency and coordination are key challenges in defending against attacks like SolarWinds, according to stakeholders. Fifty-seven percent say inconsistent application of cybersecurity best practices contributed to the Federal government's failure to defend against the SolarWinds attack, and 48 percent point to a lack of coordination with allies and industry partners.

In the short term, the fallout from SolarWinds will force CDM stakeholders to address the challenges of redirecting funds to recovery efforts (53 percent) and consolidating or reprioritizing government-wide cyber programs (47 percent).

"The SolarWinds hack highlights what many of us on the Intelligence Committee who study the issue seriously have been saying for years – cybersecurity is one of the most urgent issues facing our nation," says U.S. Representative Jim Himes (D-CT). "Clearly, there is an immediate need to ensure that government is making strategic investments, prioritizing cyber defense, and working closely with the private sector to protect from the economic and national security harms of cyberattacks."

Zeroing In on Zero Trust

Looking ahead, 85 percent of CDM stakeholders say a government-wide zero-trust architecture is key to preventing future attacks like SolarWinds. CDM can play an important role in driving toward this goal. More than 60 percent agree CDM principles and existing CDM deployments are very important to establishing a government-wide zero-trust environment.

"SolarWinds was an abrupt wake-up call, and CDM was front and center," says Steve O'Keeffe, founder, MeriTalk. "The program is clearly critical and built to last, but remains imperfect. To maximize cyber resilience in the long run, CDM must rethink priorities, revisit resources, and double down on integration with other cyber efforts – first and foremost, zero-trust adoption."

CDM More Critical Than Ever is based on an online survey of 100 Federal civilian government IT managers and System Integrators familiar with their agency's current CDM adoption efforts or the efforts of the Federal agencies they support in April 2021. The study is underwritten by Corelight, Duo, Gigamon, Invicti, Recorded Future, RedSeal, and Tenable. The report has a margin of error of ±9.78 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. To download the full report, please visit https://www.meritalk.com/study/cdm-more-critical-than-ever/.

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