

(ISC)² 2012 Career Impact Survey Executive Summary

The Double Edged Sword: Security Career Opportunities Spike While Hiring Challenges Grow

Skilled security professionals enjoy job stability and mobility, but enterprises struggle to find qualified people

If you're a well-trained, experienced professional in today's IT security market, you are facing a world of opportunity. But if you're an IT executive looking to find such people for your enterprise, you're in for a tough challenge.

These two conclusions are at the heart of this year's (ISC)² Career Impact Survey, a bi-annual benchmark of IT security hiring trends and career development plans. The survey, which polls more than 80,000 of (ISC)²'s members in more than 135 countries, collected data from more than 2,250 security professionals.

The survey paints a picture that shows both sides of a skyrocketing security labor market and the increasing cognizance of threats to corporate data. On one side, skilled security professionals are enjoying a nearly full-employment market, in which job stability is the norm and upward mobility is the norm, both unprecedented trends in today's weakened economy. Today's highly trained and experienced security professional is seeing both a significant increase in salary and abundant opportunities for job growth and change, despite a sluggish economic environment elsewhere in the IT industry.

On the flip side of that coin is the commercial organization's perspective on hiring. Many commercial organizations plan to increase their staffing in the coming year and are struggling to find qualified candidates. In fact, the search for security professionals with the right level of skills, experience, certification, and salary expectations were all cited as significant challenges by those who do the hiring.

A Skilled Professional's Market

For those who have the right skills, experience and training, the security field is green with opportunity. The information security profession offers not only stability but also upward mobility – opportunities almost unheard of in the current job market. Some highlights from survey respondents:

- **IT security is a nearly full-employment market:** 96 percent of the survey respondents are currently employed. Only 7 percent of information security professionals were unemployed at any point during 2011.

- **Qualified security professionals can expect to increase their real income:** Nearly 70 percent of respondents received a salary increase in 2011. More than half – 55 percent – expect to receive an increase in 2012.
- **Great opportunities for career advancement:** While more than a third of respondents – 35 percent – said they changed jobs last year, the majority – 53 percent – said they made the change because they had opportunities for advancement.
- **Layoffs/redundancies are not prevalent:** Of those who were unemployed – just 80 respondents – half of those said they had been laid off. Only 27 percent of respondents said they saw an increase in layoffs in the field.

These results suggest that highly trained and qualified security professionals – 95 percent of those who answered the survey carry the CISSP credential – are finding an environment that offers stability of employment, real growth in income, and many opportunities for advancement. With the right training and background, the security industry is an excellent place for an IT professional to be.

Talent Shortage

While the career outlook for well-trained security professionals is at an all-time high, there are not nearly enough of these skilled professionals to go around. As threats increase and enterprises place an increasingly higher level of priority on the security function, the need for trained staff is deep. Employers are looking for highly skilled and qualified professionals that possess a basic understanding of information security concepts, directly related experience and strong technical skills. But those who do the hiring say such staff are becoming increasingly difficult to find. (ISC)² Career Impact Survey revealed the following trends:

- **Security is a priority staffing need:** 72 percent of respondents said that in 2011, their organization hired individuals specifically for information security roles.
- **Hiring is on the rise:** 62 percent reported that they are looking to hire additional permanent or contract information security employees in 2012. Roughly 34 percent reported an increase in new hires in 2011 and 51 percent plan to hire permanent information security staff this year; of those, 62 percent plan to hire 1-2 people, and 22 percent plan to hire 3-4 people.
- **Security budgets are increasing:** Some 30 percent of respondents expect information security budgets and equipment purchases to increase in 2012.

- **The perception of the security threat is growing:** 56 percent of those surveyed reported increased security risks in 2011 – 38 percent attributed most of that threat activity to mobile devices.
- **Finding the right people is challenging:** The majority of those who hire (50.2 percent) said it has been “somewhat difficult” to find the right candidate to fill their open security staff positions. Another 29 percent characterized the search as “very difficult.”
- **Hiring can be a slow process.** Some 44 percent of hiring managers said that it has taken them one to three months to find and hire the right security person to fill an open position. 36 percent said it has taken them three to six months, and 12.5 percent said it has taken six or more months.

Finding the Right Mix of Skills for the Job

What are the skills and qualifications that IT and security managers are looking for in the hiring process? A solid background of training, proven skills, and real experience are the most important factors, according to the responses from hiring managers.

- **Only qualified individuals need apply:** Of those hiring, 81 percent said an understanding of information security concepts is an important factor in their hiring decisions. 72 percent are looking for directly related experience and 76 percent require technical skills.
- **Skilled, experienced and qualified professionals are difficult to find – so is meeting their salary expectations:** When asked which qualifications were the hardest to find, 61 percent of hiring managers described finding people with the right skills as “very challenging.” 52 percent said finding people with the right experience is also very challenging. 49 percent said meeting a prospective employee’s salary expectations is “somewhat challenging;” 43 percent said finding people with the right certification is somewhat challenging.
- **Operations security and security management skills lead hiring requirements:** The top skills hiring managers are looking for are:
 - Operations security – 55 percent
 - Security management practices – 52 percent
 - Access control systems/methodology – 51 percent
 - Security architecture/models – 50 percent
 - Risk management – 49 percent
 - Telecom/network security – 45 percent
 - Applications/system development security – 44 percent
 - Cloud/virtualization – 35 percent

Conclusions

Even in the most difficult of economic times, security is a full-employment field. With the growing number of threats on the horizon, and the growing awareness of cyber security vulnerabilities and issues inside the enterprise, it is clear that security will be a top priority for the coming year and likely for years to come.

While highly qualified and trained security professionals can virtually write their own ticket to a new position, there clearly are not enough of them. In the days ahead, the need is greater than ever to build a larger pool of qualified professionals, and to continuously improve the skillset, experience, and training of those already in the industry.

Background and Process

The (ISC)² 2012 Career Impact Survey was conducted from December 2011 to January 2012, with 2,256 respondents globally to gain insights into how economic conditions and security threats affected the information security profession in 2011 and to gauge the 2012 outlook. The most common sectors represented were government at 28.9 percent; information technology at 28.5 percent; professional services at 18.2 percent; banking at 11.3 percent, and telecommunications at 9.9 percent. The majority of respondents' organizations had over 1,000 employees. With the help of these survey respondents, (ISC)² is helping the information security industry identify important workforce trends in an effort to help solve the global cyber security workforce crisis.

(ISC)² conducts research regularly to gain insight into the state of the information security workforce and offers support for its certified members seeking employment and career enhancement, including free resume posting and job alerts on its Career Tools site (www.isc2.org/careers). Employers can post jobs and search resumes for free as well, giving them a direct line to an audience of qualified information security professionals.

Aggregate results for the (ISC)² 2012 Career Impact Survey can be found at:
<https://www.isc2.org/industry-resources.aspx>

About (ISC)²

(ISC)² is the largest not-for-profit membership body of certified information security professionals worldwide, with over 80,000 members in more than 135 countries. Globally recognized as the Gold Standard, (ISC)² issues the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP[®]) and related concentrations, as well as the Certified Secure Software Lifecycle Professional (CSSLP[®]), Certified Authorization Professional (CAP[®]), and Systems Security Certified Practitioner (SSCP[®]) credentials to qualifying candidates. (ISC)²'s certifications are among the first information technology credentials to meet the

stringent requirements of ISO/IEC Standard 17024, a global benchmark for assessing and certifying personnel. (ISC)² also offers education programs and services based on its CBK[®], a compendium of information security topics. More information is available at www.isc2.org

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