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The vCISO Impact Playbook

Why Advice Alone No Longer Satisfies Leadership Teams

About the Authors

of the vCISO Impact Playbook

The vCISO Impact Playbook is primarily authored by Steve Hindle, with supporting contributions from Simon Linstead. Together, they draw upon decades of real-world experience helping organisations improve cybersecurity maturity, strengthen operational resilience, and build security programmes that deliver measurable business outcomes.

Steve Hindle
Co-Founder & CEO

Steve has spent much of his career supporting organisations through complex security challenges, major incidents, and periods of organisational change. Having worked directly with executive leadership teams across multiple sectors and international environments, he brings a practical perspective on risk management, incident response, security operations, and leadership decision-making under pressure. His experience consistently reinforces a simple principle: successful security programmes are built on clarity, prioritisation, and measurable progress rather than technology alone.

Simon Linstead
Co-Founder & Vice President

Simon brings over two decades of experience working within regulated environments, including governance, oversight, and risk-focused leadership roles. As Co-Founder of Simple Security and Founder of the global Infosec.live community, he works closely with security leaders, consultants, MSPs, and business executives to understand the challenges organisations face when translating cybersecurity objectives into practical, sustainable programmes. His contribution focuses on helping bridge the gap between business priorities, governance requirements, and effective security execution.

Through their work at Simple Security, Steve and Simon help organisations move beyond fragmented security activities and towards structured, outcome-driven programmes that provide direction, accountability, visibility, and long-term operational resilience.

Why Advice Alone No Longer Satisfies Leadership Teams

Over the past decade, organizations have invested heavily in cybersecurity. More tools. More reporting. More oversight. But confidence hasn't kept pace. In fact, many leadership teams are now asking security leaders an uncomfortable question: **If we're doing more, why doesn't it feel like we're safer.**

The emerging confidence gap

Many organizations are not suffering from a lack of visibility. They are suffering from a lack of confidence.

A gap has emerged between:

- what security teams report
- and what leadership teams actually feel

This is the confidence gap - and closing it is now the real role of modern security leadership.

The shift from reporting to reassurance

Traditionally, many vCISO engagements focused on visibility:

- posture reviews
- risk registers
- framework alignment
- roadmaps
- board updates

These answer the question, "What do we have?"
But leadership teams today are asking different questions:

- Where are we now?
- What should we prioritise next?
- Are we properly covered?
- How do we demonstrate progress?
- Are we ready if something happens?

The responses to these questions answer:

"Are we going to be okay?" These are not reporting questions, they are confidence questions.

Why is this shift happening now?

This shift is not theoretical. Recent research shows that 39% of board directors lack confidence in current cybersecurity investments, despite increased spending and tooling. At the same time, security budgets across many organisations are flat or declining - forcing leaders to justify outcomes, not activity.

Despite ongoing investment, many organisations already have:

- multiple security tools
- monitoring in place
- external providers
- compliance activity underway
- increasing board awareness

And yet the question remains:
"We can see more - but are we safer?"

This is where the role of the vCISO becomes critical.

Not as a reviewer of activity. But as a translator of activity into outcomes.

From activity to programme thinking

One of the most valuable contributions a vCISO can make is helping organisations understand that security effectiveness does not come from tools alone.

It comes from structure.
Structure provides:

- direction
- coverage
- accountability
- operational readiness

Most importantly, structure ensures that nothing critical is left undefined, unowned, or untested - which is where many security failures originate.

When these elements begin to align, leadership confidence increases naturally — often without introducing additional complexity or technology. This is the point where security starts to feel like a programme rather than a collection of initiatives.

Why impact matters more than visibility?

Visibility answers:

- What is happening?

Impact answers:

- What should we do next?

The difference between the two defines the modern vCISO role. Many organisations today are experiencing what Gartner describes as"cyber regret" - where security investments fail to deliver the expected value.

This is rarely a tooling problem. It is a failure to translate activity into outcomes.

Organisations don't struggle because they lack dashboards. They struggle because they lack clarity about priorities, ownership, and progress.

Helping leadership teams move from observation to action is where fractional security leadership delivers its greatest value.

The practical role of the outcome-led vCISO

The modern vCISO is not just a reviewer of activity. They act as a decision engine for leadership teams, helping organisations:

- translate tooling into coverage
- translate reporting into decisions
- translate frameworks into direction
- translate risk into action

This does not require replacing existing providers. It requires aligning them.And when alignment improves, confidence improves with it.

to action is where fractional security leadership delivers its greatest value.

The larger structural shift

The role of the vCISO is changing.
It is moving from:

advisor → accountable leader of outcomes

Organizations are no longer simply buying expertise. They are buying clarity, direction, and confidence in the decisions they make.

What this series will explore next?

Across the remaining issues in the vCISO Impact Playbook, we'll look at how experienced fractional security leaders help organisations:

Move conversations beyond tooling, clearly define and explain coverage, support leadership decision-making establish accountability, prepare for incidents before they happen, demonstrate measurable progress over time. Because winning the engagement is only the beginning. Leadership teams don't ultimately measure security by reports or frameworks.They measure it by asking one question: **"Do we feel confident we're making the right decisions?"**

Delivering that confidence is what defines long-term impact

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Protecting what matters shouldn't be complicated.