

"The only Password you should share."

Should BS 7799 Become an ISO Standard?

By Robert Johnston, CISSP • Robert_Johnston@hp.com

Information Security Policies have been a popular panacea for the security woes of many a firm. In this world of dynamic, rapidly changing technology can these static documents serve a valid function? There is a virtually unlimited supply of sample/model policies. How can all of these variations be valid? Is it possible that they have all passed the critical eyes of audit? Most likely, Yes. But, for how long?

Can static documented policies form an effective foundation for such a dynamic business model as information technology? Most certainly. Policies designed for the information technology environment must establish the basics and avoid the "how to." The how changes rapidly but not the what. Policies must be limited to principles and concepts, and not include solutions.

BS 7799

Is there an effective model available that is likely to withstand the

test of time? Very likely, but the jury is still out regarding BS 7799, the Information Security Management Standard published by the British Standards Institute and adopted by several countries, including the United Kingdom and Sweden as a national standard. It has been recommended as an ISO standard. It is receiving modest acceptance within the U.S.

At the same time, noted authorities and corporations within the U.S. are not ready to accept this standard and are openly objecting. Currently, very few companies are openly supporting it. There are companies that are quietly supporting it by adoption and others that are providing services (including consulting) in which they use this model when performing work for their clients.

Information Security Management BS 7799 is issued in two parts:

"Part 1: Code of practice for information security management" is a comprehensive set of security controls defining the information security practices that should be in place — those that should be published and implemented.

Continued on page 4.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Fellow Members,

Hello everyone, and a very Happy New Year to you all. Since this article was written before the Y2K rollover, I can't do much more than speculate as to what happened. All indications are that most of us are finally breathing a sigh of relief - that all of the hard work we put in resulted in a "non event". At least for some of us it is a good excuse to party at work to celebrate our efforts.

Where do we go now that Y2K is behind us? One of the most common predictions is that many companies will turn their attention to issues surrounding Information Security. I don't know who invented the old "good news, bad news" phrase, but I predict that is where we will be. The good news is that the resources that were turned loose on Y2K can now be redirected to the long term threats with which the information security professional is all too familiar, but that others just didn't quite get until now. The bad news is that I keep talking to people who tell me it is getting harder and harder to find experienced IT professionals and even harder to find those with security expertise. One of the ways that ISSA membership can help those that are in the market is our Career Center link on the ISSA home page. Here you can submit your resume or search the database for jobs related to both the IT and Information Security fields. Check it out next time you visit the site!

The time is fast approaching for two big events in the ISSA year. The first is the Annual ISSA membership meeting which will be held this year in conjunction with the SANS 2000 and Joint Computer Security Conference (JCSC) 2000 in Orlando, Fla. The JCSC takes place on March 23-24, 2000. The SANS 2000 Security conference runs from the 21st through the 28th. One of the reasons that I want to remind you again is that there has been a series of "advertising errors" that inaccurately stated conflicting information on the conference for this year. For up to date information, you can link to the SANS web site at <http://www.sans.org/sans2000/sans2000.htm> or you can call 719.599.4303 for registration. ISSA members can get discounts, so don't forget to use the registration form in this issue. Whether you register online, by phone or by snail mail, make sure you say you are registering as an ISSA member to receive your discount.

The second big upcoming ISSA event is the annual election. Information on the positions and the process can be found at our ISSA web site by linking to <http://www.issa.org/members/elections.htm>. We have had a great board again this year and rely on you to continue to provide us with the talent that has served the membership so well. When you get your ballot, make your choice and get it back to us. As they say in the big elections, "every vote counts" so please vote and make your voice heard.

Have a great year and see you at the conference in March.

Sincerely,

Howard A. Schmidt
ISSA President

ISSA 1999-00

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The ISSA PASSWORD

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ILLUSTRATION A

BS 7799 Content

- Forward
- What is information security?
- Why information security is needed?
- How to establish security requirements
- Assessing security risks
- Selecting controls
- Information security starting point
- Critical success factors
- Developing your own guidelines
- 1 Scope
- 2 Terms and Definitions
- 3 Security Policy
- 4 Security Organization
- 5 Asset Classification and Control
- 6 Personnel Security
- 7 Physical and Environmental Security
- 8 Communications and Operations Management
- 9 Access Control
- 10 Systems Development and Maintenance
- 11 Business Continuity Management
- 12 Compliance

"Part 2: Specification for information security management systems" explains how to establish, implement and document information security management systems, acknowledging that security controls to be employed are done according to the needs of each individual organization.

It is important to note that while BS 7799 goes to lengths to specify "all" appropriate controls, it recognizes that not every one is needed in every organization and provides for documenting those controls that are determined as unnecessary. In addition it acknowledges that sometimes an organization may have controls in place that reduce the level required of another control and provides for documenting such situations. It is these exception processes that allow a single set of comprehensive policies to be applied to all sizes of organizations.

Advantages

What are the advantages of BS 7799? For organizations that already have an Information Security Management System (ISMS) in place, the BS 7799 model provides a clear consistent standard against which the organization can measure itself and its policies. We also are beginning to see major world-wide enterprises that, in addition to adopting BS 7799, are insisting that those companies with which they do business also adopt the standard. Even some U.S. companies have implemented this model.

For organizations that need to develop a set of effective information security policies and/or implement an ISMS, BS 7799 contains quality guidance. However, there are those that do not support its adoption as an ISO standard. In fact, publicly within the U.S., it appears that more are taking a negative rather than positive position with a very large body remaining neutral...that is, not taking a public position. On BS 7799's initial proposal to be adopted as an ISO standard, it was defeated with the U.S. voting no. It is again within the ISO process after some significant enhancements that were completed in the early part of 1999.

Illustration A offers a complete list of the major topic areas included within BS 7799 Part 1. The unnumbered topics comprise the introductory material which many will find very useful. The numbered topics represent BS 7799's organization for delivering the suggested policy contents and describe the standard's expectations. It is somewhat detailed and includes by presentation a model for paragraph numbering and format.

Roadblocks to Adoption

Why are there so many either against or not taking a public position on BS 7799's adoption as an ISO standard? Clearly, many are in the neutral position because they are not familiar with BS 7799 and its ramifications, as well as the fact that the Information Security Community has not rallied to its support. Others are firms that provide products and or services to their clients. These firms do not want to be in the position of endorsing a standard that requires their clients to purchase more of their products/services. Of the negative positions that I have heard or seen, it is their position that BS 7799 is not sufficiently mature or exhaustive.

One of the major problems with communicating the value of BS 7799 is that the standard is protected by copyright and everyone interested must pay for a copy.

While I understand, but do not necessarily agree with, those in the neutral position, it is clear that greater education and awareness is needed. In an ideal world such a standard would be rapidly adopted. The Information Security Community must support it, as well as provide education and awareness. Professional associations, commercial associations, conference/seminar sponsors, vendors and audit firms need to step up and be heard. Please consider this to be the initial challenge.

As for those that openly object that the dynamics of Information Technology does not permit detailed comprehensive standards to ever be complete, BS 7799 recognizes this and places the onus upon the implementers to ensure that once put into practice within an organization, any unaddressed exposures be appropriately handled. Whatever shortfalls may be present within BS 7799 it is an excellent foundation upon which to build a quality set of information security policies and a good basis for developing/modeling an ISMS. See Illustration B for a copy of IBM's public statement regarding BS 7799.

One of the major problems with communicating the value of BS 7799 is that the standard is protected by copyright and everyone interested must pay for a copy. However, the fees are not excessive (currently less than \$200), but it is only available in hard copy. I have been told that a digital copy is available from BSi, but have not been able to locate it. Thus far, whenever I see it listed as digital and add it to my shopping cart, I find that only the hard copy version is finally offered. However, when you consider the cost as less than \$200 including shipping from

ILLUSTRATION B.

IBM Position on BS 7799

IBM believes BS 7799 represents a code of good practice for what constitutes one security approach for an enterprise and supports its voluntary use for assessment and continual self-improvement. The flexible approach offered by BS 7799 enables it to be useful in several industries and many different environments.

Although we believe BS 7799 is valuable as an assessment and self-improvement instrument, IBM does not support BS 7799 as an ISO standard because it does not have the precision of a technical standard.

Because of the flexibility of BS 7799, independent assessments against various parts of BS 7799 may not be comparable or equivalent. We believe such a code of practice is most effective when used by an enterprise as a self-improvement vehicle. IBM strongly discourages any commercial mandate or legislation that requires formal certification under BS 7799.

However, in some market segments, BS 7799 certification may be a requirement that IBM will address based on business needs.

the U.K., it is a bargain. Commercial policies are far more expensive and, in the opinion of many inadequate.

It is important to note that the digital copy of BS 7799 is of little use other than as a convenient reference. Specifically, it is not written in a manner that you can simply cut and paste. If that is what you want, BS 7799 will not deliver. This ensures that those using the BS 7799 model will have to put thought into the process and craft a true set of policies rather than simply copying them. They definitely offer some style that

ILLUSTRATION C

BSi's U.S. web site: <http://www.bsi-inc.org/>


This web site will link you to their home site in the U.K. when appropriate.

BSi's home web site for BS 7799: <http://www.c-cure.org/>

BSi's magazine "Business Standards" web site: <http://www.businessstandards.com/>

Subscribe to "Business Standards" at <http://www.businessstandards.com/subscribe.htm>

you can follow and they address content, but the what must be written by the individual organization effecting an implementation.

BSi also publishes a very informative magazine titled "Business Standards" which carries articles relative to all facets of business. In the March/April 1999 issue is an article titled "Protecting Corporate Assets BS 7799 Helps Organizations in Information Security Management" which can be viewed at <http://www.businessstandards.com/12ftr3.htm>. I have been told by the staff responsible for the magazine that an article on BS 7799 will appear in each issue of calendar year 2000. Subscription information and other valuable references can be found in Illustration C. 

Robert E. Johnston, CISSP is a Senior Information Security Solution Architect with Hewlett-Packard Consulting. He has more than 30 years in information management with an emphasis upon information security for 25.

Joint Computer Security Conference (JCSC)

Support ISSA by attending this year's ISSA annual Conference being held in partnership with the SANS Institute, the CIO Institute, and ISACA and in conjunction with the SANS2000 convention.

JCSC is held Thursday and Friday, March 23-24, 2000 at the Omni Rosen Hotel, Orlando, Florida
Your ISSA registration includes:

- All JCSC classes held on March 23 & 24
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ISSA Member prices are:

\$931 for JCSC

\$1271 for JCSC and March 25th SANS2000 Conference

Optional extra days available at 15% discount

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*Membership will be verified through ISSA Headquarters.



See our website
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for class selection and
more information

BOARD PROFILE

Rebecca DeWeese
Treasurer

The path to InfoSec can sometimes be twisted. Such is the case with Rebecca "Becky" DeWeese, ISSA Treasurer.

A German major in college, DeWeese was not sure what she wanted to do with her skills, but she knew she did not want to teach. She ended up in the Sears, Roebuck and Company payroll department. As she was processing raises for programmers, a light bulb went off. "How do I learn to do this?" she said.



"I have come to view myself as an auditor with a strong interest in, and more than the usual knowledge of, security controls"

At the time Sears was training its own programmers and DeWeese was not the only one who wanted to learn, so a class was formed and DeWeese and her classmates learned to program on a mainframe computer. It was the start of a new career.

Since then she has worked for several companies, including HSM, Northern Trust, Ernst & Young and in her present job at Columbia University in New York City. Back in the early 1980s she was working for Montgomery Ward Life Insurance Group in Chicago, where there was a problem getting ACF2 installed in the designated time frame — May to Labor Day. She got the job and ended up with a new career in information security.

When her husband's job moved him to New York, DeWeese started job hunting there, telling headhunters she wanted a job in information security. She ended up in IS auditing, because it was as close as she could get. She worked in auditing for Irving Trust, then spent seven years with Ernst & Young as a security consultant and IS auditor. Three years ago she joined Columbia University in the school's internal audit department.

"I have come to view myself as an auditor with a strong interest in, and more than the usual knowledge of, security controls," she said.

Her path to ISSA was a little more direct. She learned about it shortly after the New York Metro Chapter was formed and a co-worker was involved. At the time she was working for Ernst & Young, which encouraged its consultants and auditors to join professional organizations, in part as a way to make contacts. She attended a couple of meetings, but admits she let her attendance lapse until the chapter began sponsoring one day conferences. Intrigued, she agreed when she was asked to work on the committee. Her participation began to pay off.

"I certainly was learning new things and I was getting good contacts," she said.

So, she ran for the recording secretary's position and won. She spent two years in that post, then was elected president, a job she held for

three years. She has just ended her second year as past president on the chapter's board. During that time she was approached about running for the ISSA board. Finally she agreed and was able to get a commitment of support from both her boss and the chapter. Between the two there was enough money to subsidize her travel and expenses.

Now the ISSA treasurer, DeWeese is working hard on some personal goals. "I want to make sure we have clear policies and procedures so people know what to expect of the treasurer, as well as things financial," she said. "I don't think chapters know what sort of support is available from ISSA."

On the flip side, she wants to clarify what kinds of financial and other reports ISSA needs from the chapters. She also is working to make certain chapters know how to file with state governments to become tax exempt organizations. She is used to these concerns. As treasurer of her church, she was faced with many of the same issues.

As high tech as her professional life is, her personal life tends to be lower tech. She, her husband and five cats live in a loft apartment in a building that dates back to the 1830s. The elevator is hand operated and opens directly into the apartment. Her free time is devoted to fixing up the apartment, an admittedly ongoing project. Her cats are computer friendly. The minute she sits down at the computer at home, one or two jump on her lap and they think nothing of hopping to the keyboard.

When she gets some time, she likes to travel and has plans to visit her sister in Vienna. She has been in all but two of the 50 United States. In fact, when she lived in Chicago, she and her husband drove west twice with a goal of seeing as many national parks and monuments as they could. One year they headed for Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. The next year they drove to Seattle via Rapid City, SD and down the coast to San Francisco.

Those days are gone. Like many New Yorkers, DeWeese doesn't own a car. Both of theirs became a casualty of moving to Manhattan. DeWeese is happy with the twists and turns her life has taken since the day she asked how she could learn to be a programmer and is looking forward to a few more. ✍️

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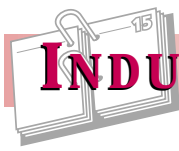
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INDUSTRY CALENDAR

Computer Security Institute

Computer Security Institute *February 8-9, 2000*
Location: Gaithersburg, MD

How to Become an Effective Information Security Professional — A Practical Guide to Encryption and Certificate Authorities *February 10-11, 2000*
Location: Gaithersburg, MD

Firewalls and Internet Security *March 14-15, 2000*
Location: St. Louis, MO

Advanced Network Security *March 16-17, 2000*
Location: St. Louis, MO

Forensic Investigation: Tools and Techniques *March 28-29, 2000*
Location: New York, NY

Windows NT Security: Assess, Penetrate and Secure *March 30-31, 2000*
Location: New York, NY

Introduction to Computer and Network Security Facilitated Risk Analysis for Business and Security Intrusion Techniques and Countermeasure *April 3-4, 2000*
Location: New Orleans, LA

Securing E-Business: A Technical Guide to Implementing PKI How to Develop Information Security Policies and Procedures Secure Migration to Windows 2000 *April 5-6, 2000*
Location: New Orleans, LA

Essential Skills for the Computer Incident Response Team *April 25-26, 2000*
Location: Cincinnati, OH

Forensic Investigation: Tools and Techniques *April 27-28, 2000*
Location: Cincinnati, OH

Introduction to Computer and Network Security *April 25-26, 2000*
Location: Gaithersburg, MD

How to Create and Sustain a Quality Security Awareness Program *April 27-28, 2000*
Location: Gaithersburg, MD

NetSec 2000 - Technical Dimensions in Network Security *June 12-14, 2000*
Location: San Francisco, CA
Information: www.gocsicom.com; csi@mfi.com; (415) 905-2626;
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Information Security Forum

Information Security Institute, *April 3-5, 2000*
InfoWorld
Location: Orlando, FL
Optional workshops – April 1, 2, & 6,7, 2000
Information: www.misti.com; mis@misti.com; (508) 879-7999;
Fax (508) 872-1153

InfoSec World 2000 Conference and Expo *April 3-5, 2000*
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Optional workshops – April 1, 2, & 6,7, 2000
Information: www.misti.com; mis@misti.com; (508) 879-7999;
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New England Chapter

Reducing Risk Through Knowledge in the Information Age - Year 2000 and Beyond *June 8, 2000*
Location: Newton, MA
Information: www.ISSA-NE.org

New York Metro Chapter

Computer Security for the 21st Century *May 23 - 24, 2000*
Location: New York, NY
Information: George Dolicker, gjpd@lucent.com
or (914) 232-2373

SANS Institute

SANS 2000 *March 21-27, 2000*
JCSC, ISSA *March 23-24, 2000*
Location: Orlando, FL
Information: info@sans.org or (719) 599-4303



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CHAPTERS

New England Chapter

Nearly 160 strong, ISSA's 27 year old New England Chapter is one of the largest and most active in the United States. It is headed by a 14 member board of directors who pride themselves in the way they reach out not only to their membership, but to others in the InfoSec community through partnerships, strategic alliances, programs, an award winning Web site and even a listserv.

Chapter president David Sawin credits much of the chapter's success to ground work laid by two immediate past presidents who went on to national roles in ISSA — David Cullinane and Ed Norris — as well as a strong current board of directors.

"Our board is made up of over achievers and motivated individuals," he said.

Each year board members look at their portfolios and jointly establish formal job responsibilities and goals. Though the chapter meets every other month, the board gets together either in person or via telephone conference calls monthly. In addition, there are team building programs and social occasions built into the schedule to encourage members to get to know each other and to facilitate team work.

Most of the board members have been active in the chapter for a long time. For instance, secretary Maureen Toughey has held that position for three years, and is primarily responsible for documenting the chapter's and the board's activities. In an effort to keep the chapter and its activities fresh and relevant to its members, three or four advisors are appointed each year by the president. These hold no particular jobs, but have been identified as people with good ideas who are in touch with what is going on in the InfoSec community, and who may be good candidates for future board positions.

"Their job is to make sure we don't get stale," Sawin said.

The chapter serves a six-state area, and meeting locations are rotated among sites within a 25 mile radius of Boston, MA. Meetings, which attract 40-50 people, also feature a combination of general, technical and vendor presentations. The vendor relations are coordinated by Greg Dunne. Once a year the chapter sponsors a large meeting at the Boston World Trade Center, along with other, related, groups. Last year nearly 170 people attended.

In an effort to streamline its activities and facilitate communication, the New England Chapter has gone to an almost paperless system. Notices of events, meetings and news are disseminated through a network of e-mail and Web site postings. Sawin is particularly proud of the Web Site (www.ISSA-NE.org), which is shepherded by Webmaster Richard Van Horn. ISSA has honored it two years in a row.

Van Horn makes sure it is updated regularly with timely, relevant information, and provides hyperlinks to InfoSec tools and references. Corporate sponsors and vendor partners also are represented.

One of the chapter's most high profile projects is "Tidbits," an InfoSec listserv aimed at InfoSec professionals in the business world, providing them relevant events of interest. It is maintained by members Robert Johnston and Chip Seymour. Seymour also is the chapter's vice president. About 150 people, both in and out of the chapter, subscribe to the list, which is updated weekly.

Seymour collaborates with Sawin on another project — the Patriots and Minuteman awards. These are given to chapter members, both on and off the board, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help out.

Candy Alexander runs the chapter's corporate sponsorship program. Under her leadership it has grown significantly, not only providing information to members, but also enhancing the chapter's coffers as well. Corporate sponsors have a presence on the chapter's web site, as well as the ability to showcase their wares to members during meetings.

Two strategic alliances have proved to be among the more successful of the chapter's newer actions. The association with the High Tech Crime Investigators Association (HTCIA) was highlighted by a joint meeting that attracted 140 people. In March the chapter also will hold a joint meeting with the Information Systems Auditors Control Association (ISACA), another new partner.

Treasurer David Dumas recently oversaw the move to automate the chapter's finances, including financial records as well as banking.

"That brought us into the 21st century," Sawin said.

Much of the chapter's push forward has come through close contact with the membership. Membership director Robin Wheeler surveys participants following each meeting regarding everything from meeting location to programs and needs. Responses are carefully reviewed.

Even with its eye to the future, the chapter doesn't forget its past. In fact, it's founding president, Jerry Isaacson, continues to be active on the board.

"What it boils down to is board members all have jobs and goals, which they do and do well," Sawin said.

Phoenix Home of New Chapter

By Cindy Donaldson

cdonaldson@collinscsg.com

ISSA now has a presence in sunny Phoenix, AZ. Cindy Donaldson founded the Phoenix ISSA Chapter after her relocation from the Washington D.C. area, where she was a member of the National Capital Area Chapter. In addition to providing the membership with interesting speakers and the forum for establishing committees, the Phoenix ISSA Chapter plans to establish a chapter website and newsletter to increase communications and information sharing. The board of directors hopes that as the city grows, the chapter grows along with it.

The newly elected board of directors includes Cindy Donaldson, Collins Consulting Group; Jim Garrett, Allied Signal; A.J. West, Computer Science Innovations; and Ed Vasko, Bull Worldwide Information Systems.

Registration Form for JCSC - March 23-24, 2000



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*Full Price is charged after 2/20/2000 of \$1095 for March 23rd SANS2000 Conference and JCSC or \$1495 for JCSC and March 23rd and 25th SANS2000 Conference; Also a late fee is charged after March 8, 2000 of \$75.00

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SECURITY CONFERENCE

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

JCSC Topics Include:

- Joint presentations by CIOs and CISOs, Auditors and CIOs, Sysadmins and CISOs on effective strategies for cooperation
- Winners of the Y2000 Information Security Leadership Awards for Technology Leadership
- The Great Debate: To NT Or Not to NT: That is the Question
- The Number One Security Exposition featuring vendors with innovative and/or popular solutions to important security challenges
- What's Wrong With the Current Security Model" by Dr. Mudge and "Horror Stories from the Security Front," by Marcus Ranum
- Evening Birds-of-A-Feather Sessions for sharing challenges and finding solutions
- Access to four additional tracks of outstanding technical briefings and short courses at SANS2000
- A huge exhibition of leading security tools and services.

JCSC AGENDA

Day One

Thursday,
March 23, 2000

Welcome: Franklin Reeder, Chairman of the Security Council, The CIO Institute

Conference Chairman's Opening

"A New way of Thinking About Security," Dr. Eugene Schultz, Global Integrity

"Computer Crime: Today and Tomorrow," Scott Charney, Chief, Computer Crimes Division, U.S. Department of Justice (to be confirmed)

"CyberTerrorism: A Reality Check," Alan Paller, Director of Research, the CIO Institute

"Intrusion Detection Overview and Trends in Internet Attacks," Stephen Northcutt, Director of Intrusion Detection and SNAP Program Director, The SANS Institute

"Windows NT Security: Myths and Reality," Dr. Eugene Schultz, Trusted Security Advisor, Global Integrity

"Security Horror Stories We Have Seen This Year," Marcus Ranum, President, Network Flight Recorder

"What's Wrong With The Current Security Model? Novel Approaches to Novel Problems," Dr. Mudge, LOphT Heady Industries

Day Two

Friday,
March 24, 2000

Note: On Day Two, your JCS badge will also get you into any of the four tracks of short courses and technical briefings at the Annual SANS Conference.

"High Speed Forensics: The Brazil Project at NASA," Tom Talleur, Director of the Computer Crimes Unit, NASA Office of Inspector General

"Building Strategic Partnerships between CISOs and CIOs," Peter Browne, CISO, First Union

"Building Strategic Partnerships between CIOs and Auditors," Chris Hendricks, Director of Information Systems Audits, US House of Representatives, Office of the Inspector and Chris Bollister, Deputy Associate Administrator, House Information Resources, US House of Representatives

"How To Manage Your Auditor," Craig McGuffin

The Great Debate

"To NT or Not to NT, That is the Question"

"What Do We Have to Learn from the Randall Schwartz Situation?" Randall Schwartz, Stonehenge Consulting Services

"Protecting Against Internal Network Threats," Dr. Bill Hancock, Network-1

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