

Amira Muaket

Professor Duvall

Internship Class, CYSE-368

28 February 2025

## Reflection Journal #2

For the next 50 hours, I decided to conduct an interview with my supervisor, Dr. James Allen, his current position at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) is the Deputy Chief Information Security Officer.

Dr. Allen began his career in the cybersecurity/IT field after serving 22 years in the U.S. Navy. He was first hired as a System Administrator at Fort Bragg, located in North Carolina, where he worked for two years. In that same company, was promoted to certification and accreditations, where he utilized “the DITSCAP accreditation system”. Later, he began his role in cybersecurity for the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), where continued to work on certification and accreditations and also operating the Security Operations Center (SOC), where he ran various security tools. After his time at JSOC, Dr. Allen worked as the Chief Information Systems Security Officer (CISSO) for the defense security service in Quantico, where he managed the entire cybersecurity program. Eventually, he began his role as Deputy CISO at the CFTC, where he was responsible for maintaining and operating the cybersecurity program. His duties involved funding, ensuring employees receive proper training, and providing professional guidance.

Dr. Allen highlighted the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by someone in this field revolve around “knowledge and operation of how to manage a program”. He emphasizes the importance of understanding how to manage a cybersecurity program by

focusing on factors such as people, processes, technology, and funding. Funding is essential to pay for your tools, ensure you have people's skills, and maintain proper processes by following proper protocols such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and cybersecurity frameworks to clearly assign roles and responsibilities.

Regarding soft skills, Dr. Allen pointed out “people work with people”. He goes on stating a key factor in a successful environment is to understand others. Try helping them out, ensuring others are completing their tasks, having clear communication with each other, and overall setting an example to everyone around you. Emphasizing that if you aren't a people person then you won't get the kind of results you want.

For technical skills, he mentions knowing the command line on any computer and understanding the basics when it comes to languages such as Python and Java. Also mentions that having insights about cybersecurity tools is essential, he gave an example, when running scans you need to understand what you are analyzing. Adds one must have knowledge of patching, running an operating system, and the ability to use guidelines such as Security Technical Implementation Guides (STGs) or CIS Benchmarks. Once acknowledging the technical side, you can determine security decisions and develop strategies to mitigate certain cyber situations.

Finally, as for entry-level positions to gain experience that can eventually lead to Deputy CISO is anything cybersecurity-related roles. Positions can include SOC analyst, entry-level security engineer, cybersecurity analyst, or roles in certifications and accreditation. However, Dr. Allen clarifies that it shouldn't just be about securing an entry-level job, but consistently building your knowledge. Cybersecurity is always evolving and having an understanding of the basics is crucial, but always try to indulge yourself in the latest trends. Additionally, grasping all the

factors that go into cybersecurity, for example, the technical skills, people skills, policies and regulations, engineering, and the information systems you will be working with.

Overall, I enjoyed this interview as it provided a clearer understanding of what is cybersecurity, with all the positions and roles that are included. I truly appreciate Dr. Allen for taking the time to speak with me, as I've learned so much from this interview. I've noticed how skills, both technical and soft, are important in this field, while consistently expanding your knowledge in the ever-changing world where technology is constantly advancing. I feel more comfortable as well as motivated to strive and gain more hands-on experience through this internship as it can elevate my knowledge and skills. It's given me a better idea of what my future career in the technical world could look like.