

Executive summary

We surveyed two distinct groups within companies – C-level executives at Fortune 500 companies, and IT Decision Makers (ITDMs), asking them about their attitudes to risk and their understanding of the adversaries facing them, and how they marshalled their organisations' resources in defence.

Cyber security represents the most significant business challenge to 71% of C-suite respondents. Amongst ITDMs, 72% expect to be targeted by a cyber attack over the next 12 months.

There was a noticeable difference between the two groups when it came to all three of these areas. Perhaps more worrying: both groups believe the other is responsible in the event of a successful breach.

Close examination of the responses to our survey suggested that, while these two groups agree on many things, they often do so from very different perspectives, symptomatic of a lack of clear communication and agreed basic information shared between executives and IT leaders. In turn, this division shapes how and when companies go about defending themselves and, at the extreme, whether they are able to do so effectively.

This extended to the sorts of things the two groups worried about. Senior executives, charged with assessing and managing business risk, were worried about the theft of sensitive information and customers' personal data. In contrast, IT managers were concerned with a more broad set of potential losses, some of which were operational, but many of which reflected a more mature understanding of the consequences of a successful attack.

It is also notable that the two groups differed in their assessment of the cost of an attack: C-level executives estimated \$11.6 million, while IT Decision Makers averaged out at \$19.2 million.

In both groups, confidence in their organisations' defences against cyber attack was very high. Our research revealed that businesses are increasingly aware of the unpredictable nature of the cyber threats they face. Businesses are increasingly aware of the unpredictable nature of the cyber threats they face, and, despite differences, C-suite executives and ITDMs alike are taking increasingly pragmatic and informed choices about how they go about minimising the risks they face.

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