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THREE SHIPS

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The cyber and privacy professions are growing. Both are seen as critical to ensuring the safety and security of individuals, organisations and governments – with the privacy profession also focused on preserving the rights of individuals in respect of the collection and handling of their personal information. The building blocks of mentorship, leadership and allyship are key to the progression and vitality of these fields and to the success of the professionals within them.

ON MENTORSHIP..

Just over twenty years ago I had the great fortune to meet a person who would become my career-long mentor, friend and (fast forward to today) my business partner. In addition to benefitting from his deep knowledge of privacy law and practice in Australia and abroad, I learned about the long-game: that it would take patience, determination and planning to deliver myself to the so-called 'top' of my career.

A mentor is often described as someone who provides guidance, support and advice to an individual who is new to the field or looking to advance their career. However, my experience is that mentorship is more nuanced than this, for both mentor and mentee. It is less an activity and more a process of discovery, particularly where the connection is lasting.

I was fortunate to be offered one-on-one mentoring just when I needed it, and that is something I reflect on with much gratitude (I am aware group mentoring and online mentoring can offer privacy and cyber professionals great support too). The benefits of mentorship are different for everyone, and can include:

1. **Knowledge transfer** - mentors share their knowledge and experience with mentees, helping them learn new skills and gain a deeper understanding of their profession.
2. **Career advancement** - mentors provide guidance and advice on how mentees can advance in their profession, including how to gain new certifications and develop new skills.
3. **Personal growth** - mentors help mentees develop their personal and professional skills, including communication, leadership and problem-solving.
4. **Networking** - mentors introduce mentees to other professionals, helping them build their network and connect with potential employers.

Living the career long game my mentor described (this, I suppose, is the discovery part), I have found that the 'top' is not, after all, a destination. It is more of a viewing platform, a chance to reflect on

the career path travelled before considering what comes next.

In my own role as a mentor to privacy and cyber professionals, I too encourage an ongoing association. To my mentees I offer my own pearls of wisdom, including the need for professional resilience. The hard work, the learning, the successes and hiccups are all, in their way, fortifying. And strength (particularly of character) is measured as much by how people respond to losses, disappointments and stumbles as by their response to any of the public high notes.

ON LEADERSHIP..

Leadership takes many forms: organisational leadership, team leadership, project leadership and, increasingly in my experience, servant leadership. Servant leadership emphasises the importance of serving others first before leading them. It is a leadership approach that focuses on the needs and wellbeing of the people being led, rather than the leader's own interests or goals.

For me, the notion of being a servant leader grew from experiences earlier in my career, when I was 'being led' and when my views about success and career sustainability were still forming.

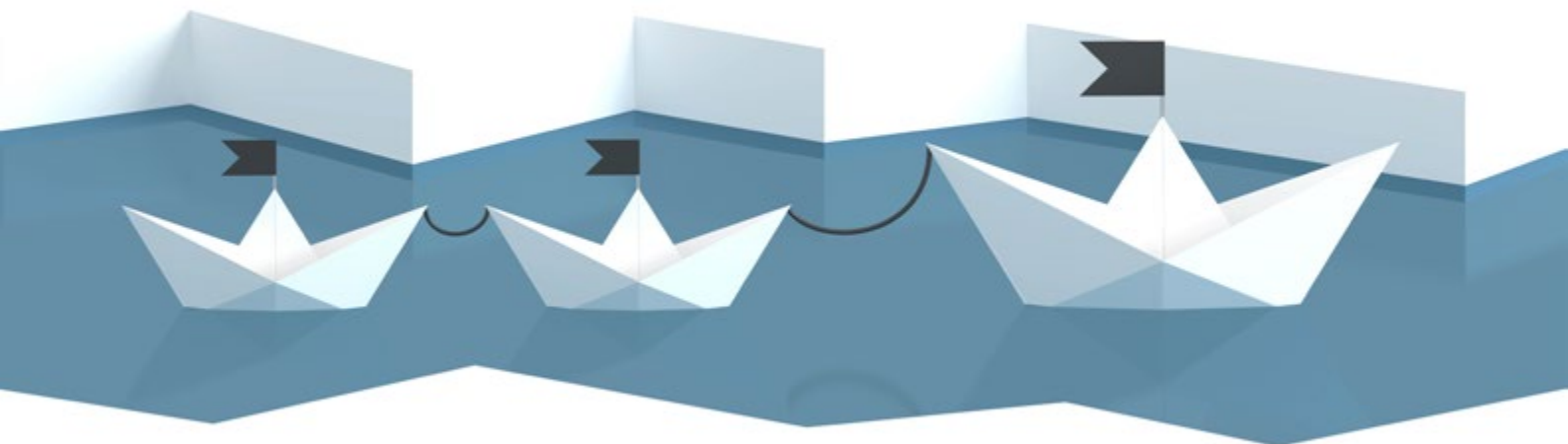
It is not easy to visualise a leader in a privacy and cyber consultancy actually putting humility, empathy and a strong commitment to ethical and moral

principles ahead of invoicing – and to be clear, I do not do this. Instead, I listen and pitch in. In corporate speak, I comfortably 'deleverage' myself as partner and support the people who need supporting (ie, actually help with the work). I also believe my role is to create a workplace and structures that empower people to be successful, and to complete their projects on time and with excellence. This, of course produces happy clients who are happy to receive a bill for services rendered. However, the personal and professional growth of team members and the creation of a positive and supportive environment where everyone can thrive and succeed matter deeply to me.

The benefits of strong leadership in privacy and cyber are numerous. They include:

1. **Vision** - leaders provide a clear vision for the future of the organisation or project and help guide the team toward success.
2. **Motivation** - leaders motivate the team to work toward a common goal, inspiring them to do their best work.
3. **Accountability** - leaders hold themselves and their team accountable for their actions.
4. **Innovation** - leaders encourage innovation and creativity and help their team develop new ideas and solutions to complex problems.

That said, and returning to mentorship for a moment, I believe leadership (in its various forms) is not the



exclusive domain of the boss or the one in charge. It is not a trait limited to a select few individuals. Anyone can be a leader, regardless of their background, education or experience. Leadership is about having a vision, setting goals and inspiring others to work toward achieving those goals. It is about being able to communicate effectively, listen to others and make decisions that benefit the group.

Being a leader also requires a willingness to take risks, learn from mistakes and adapt to changing circumstances. With dedication, hard work, a commitment to personal growth and that of society, anyone can develop the skills and qualities needed to become an effective leader. A quality I much admire in leaders is allyship.

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ON ALLYSHIP...

I saw a great example of allyship (and leadership!) recently. A colleague who had been asked to speak on a cybersecurity panel suggested the organiser should revise the all-male (albeit racially diverse) panel to include women. It seems a small thing, but supporting inclusion most certainly is not.

For the uninitiated, allyship is the act of supporting and advocating for a marginalised group of which one is not a member. It involves recognising and acknowledging one's own privilege (or advantageous position) and using it to amplify the voices and

experiences of those who are oppressed or marginalised. However, by demonstrating allyship, my colleague became the subject of criticism and vitriol on social media.

In the privacy and cyber professions, the benefits of allyship are obvious.

1. **Diversity and inclusion** - allyship helps to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, which can lead to better problem-solving and innovation.
2. **Support** - allyship supports and encourages individuals who may feel isolated or marginalised in the workplace.
3. **Education** - allyship educates individuals on the experiences and perspectives of those from different backgrounds, leading to greater understanding and empathy.
4. **Challenging bias** - allyship challenges biases and stereotypes in the workplace, creating a more equitable environment for all.

Taken together these three 'ships' increase staff cohesion in cybersecurity and privacy and help nurture successful professionals. Mentorship supports the transfer of knowledge, advancement of careers and development of personal and professional skills. Leadership can be supportive, motivational for teams, hold individuals accountable and encourage innovation. Allyship creates a more diverse and inclusive workplace, provides support and education and challenges biases and stereotypes. A trifecta!



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