

Eric Washington

Information Security Expert
ABN AMRO

Eric Washington is, in his own words, a very studious guy with an everlasting hunger for knowledge. That explains the numerous courses he followed with SANS and others. “I have obtained a lot of knowledge, studying for the GIAC certifications. That has helped me both in my work and in my career.” Eric currently works as an information security expert within the SOC team at the Dutch bank ABN AMRO.

For years Eric Washington worked in networking at BT, but when his team was offshored to India, he asked a former colleague about positions at their SOC team, where he went to work for in 2012. Shortly after his move from networking to security, he landed a job at a local financial institution, the Farmers & Merchants Bank of Long Beach in California. As a result of the bank being a Cisco customer, Eric learned all about security with Cisco tools, but when he began to manage units within

the company he felt the need to learn more. “I wanted to follow the SANS SEC401 (Security Essentials Bootcamp) course, but the CISO at the bank advised me to start with the SEC504 (Hacker Techniques), because the SEC401 was beneath my skillset at that time.”

NetWars

“It was everything I expected it to be because I’d heard and read a lot about SANS and their courses. The daily course material was really awesome, but what really added to my skillset was the NetWars Experience. During the day, you learn about all these security skills in a lab environment. But if you participate in NetWars, you really have to think for yourself, instead of following a step by step instruction. That forces you to put into practice what you’ve learnt at SANS. It was absolutely the highlight of the training for me.” The other thing that he appreciated was the fact that SANS doesn’t train people in specific tools, but teaches a concept. “Coming from a Cisco background, I was used to being taught specific products, but SANS takes its courses to a higher level and that gave me a broader view of security.”

“My SANS training, combined with other courses and my experience, contribute to what I do now”

Any large threat

As of 2016, Eric joined the Dutch bank ABN AMRO as a member of their SOC, but only recently has he

CASE STUDY

“SANS teaches you a security concept rather than how to use tools”

landed his own team within the SOC, called Secured Networking, who are responsible for securing the cloud, improving the state of the network access control, and a whole lot more. “We pay large attention to any threat to any large financial institution, especially targeting Europe and specifically The Netherlands is something we’re concerned with. Even if it isn’t necessarily a bank, if it is something that targets The Netherlands, it is something we’re concerned about. Things like the cybergangs that have botnets targeting the bank with DDOS or phishing campaigns.”

Geared toward exam

Even though Eric doesn’t have to apply all the skills he learned at SANS, the knowledge he obtained is very valuable to him. “My combined experience and the knowledge obtained at other courses, contribute to what I do now. For instance, I do a lot of work now related to using the web application firewall, we are also trying to build a proxy within AWS and Azure. These are things I’m heavily involved in and my SANS courses weren’t geared towards the type of work that I do now, but all of the security knowledge overall, from SANS and other training institutions, contribute to how I help build a solution.” The information security expert liked all of the SANS material and the way the courses were structured, and of course the lab environment. Most of the other training he followed was self-study. “It is hard to compare, but the atmosphere was good and I liked having a

“I just hit the ground running, because that is what I am used to in IT since it has always been that way”

knowledgeable and SANS certified teacher. Moreover, all the material is geared toward the GIAC-exam.”

No stress or worries

Although Eric works in a busy environment, he tends not to worry much. “I think every job has stressful days, but there has never been a security incident that caused me great stress. Of course, when something happens, and my managers are on my back asking questions, that puts pressure on me. An incident has a lot of visibility and the stress comes from the pressure, not the security incident itself.” Moreover, he is quite an optimistic guy as well. “I feel like everything will always turn out right. I have been working in IT for such a long time and our field inherently comes with new

developments and technologies, but, as we say in America, I’ll cross that bridge when I get to it. It means when an issue comes up, I will deal with it at that time. That is basically what I have been doing within my new role since I have to secure the Azure environment. I have to adjust our change management process to AWS, to really learn the cloud. I just hit the ground running, that is what I am used to in IT since it has always been that way. I always expect to be thrown into the deep end without getting much knowledge about it for it to change very rapidly.”

No stress or worries

Eric makes sure he keeps his knowledge up to date. Not only with a lot of self-study and numerous training courses, but also via the SANS Reading Room. “Our entire team uses the SANS instructors’ podcasts and I sometimes look up whitepapers, but mostly I find the Newsbites email really helpful.” When asked

if he could wake up tomorrow with a brand new skill, he hesitates and says: “Maybe Python. I might be making it more difficult than it really is, but it is a bit intimidating to me, so I haven’t taken the moment to jump into it, but if it could be programmed into my brain tomorrow, I think that would be great. It is something that I really don’t want to go off and take the time to master because I am also trying to learn Dutch now that I live in the Netherlands.”

SANS COURSES THAT ERIC FOLLOWED:

SEC504 – Hacker Tools, Techniques, Exploits and Incident Handling

SEC503 – Intrusion Detection In-Depth

SEC560 – Network Penetration Testing and Ethical Hacking

GIAC CERTIFICATIONS:

GCIH

GCIA

GPEN

Are you interested in the online [assessments](#) or [courses](#) that SANS provides? Take a look at the SANS Institute’s comprehensive website or get in touch with a SANS advisor at www.sans.org

Contact SANS

Email: emea@sans.org

Tel: +44 20 3384 3470

Address: SANS EMEA,

PO Box 124, Swansea, SA 9BB, UK

www.sans.org