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RISK +
CYBER**



DEFENDING THE COURT:

Cybersecurity Excellence for the Detroit Pistons

How the Detroit Pistons Built
a Robust Cybersecurity
Framework with Echelon



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Defending the 313 with a Strong Cybersecurity Foundation for Detroit Basketball

The Detroit Pistons, a celebrated NBA team known for its excellence both on the court and through community-driven initiatives, operates in a dynamic, high-profile environment. With over 380 employees and numerous stakeholders, the organization manages diverse areas, including game-day logistics, data protection, and business operations, all while upholding a critical level of public trust.

However, safeguarding these functions posed a distinct challenge.



Faced with increasing cybersecurity threats and the need for NBA compliance, Paul Rapier, VP of IT for the Detroit Pistons, recognized the necessity of a comprehensive and proactive cybersecurity strategy.

"Being a high-profile organization with a small IT team, **we needed expertise to optimize and align our security posture,**" shared Rapier.

Echelon Risk + Cyber stepped in to bolster the Pistons' cybersecurity program. This collaboration spanned multiple service areas, including penetration testing, policy governance, and incident response tabletop exercises.

Paul Rapier worked closely with Echelon team members, including Josh Fleming, Senior Cybersecurity Manager of Risk Advisory & GRC services; John Blanz, Cybersecurity Consultant for the Risk Advisory team; Steve Snider, Senior Cybersecurity Manager for Offensive Security services; and Devin Jones, Principal Consultant for the Offensive Security team.

The goal was simple yet impactful: create a sustainable cybersecurity roadmap that mitigates risks, ensures compliance, and elevates the organization's defensive capabilities.

Penetration Testing Safeguards Cloud Transitions

One of the first projects in the collaboration was a detailed penetration testing exercise. This provided the Pistons with deeper visibility into their security landscape. Devin Jones led the effort to uncover vulnerabilities within their hybrid infrastructure, which combined on-premises and cloud frameworks.

Devin Jones, Principal Consultant for the Offensive Security team said:

“The most significant discovery was how hybrid environments inherently create vulnerabilities,” explained Jones. **“Our job wasn’t just to highlight the risks but to help the Pistons prioritize safeguarding their technology as it transitions into the cloud.”**



Echelon’s testing approach had two layers. Jones elaborated, “While automated testing identified low-hanging fruit, hands-on validation uncovered deeper misconfigurations and more complex attack vectors. This ensured the results weren’t just thorough, but actionable.”



The collaboration didn’t stop at testing. Steve Snider, who provided wireless environment assessments on-site, highlighted the Pistons’ proactive attitude.

“Their technical teams were quick to implement our recommendations. **They were invested in making actionable improvements, which set the tone for long-term readiness,**” Snider commented.

Key recommendations for improvement included addressing outdated systems and enhancing overall security policies to align with NIST standards. These measures aimed to ensure that the organization maintained a high level of security and compliance. By implementing these changes, the organization could better protect its assets and maintain a robust and resilient infrastructure.

Tabletop Exercises Build Cross-Functional Incident Response

To improve incident readiness, Echelon conducted a full-scale tabletop exercise with the Pistons. This session created a simulated breach environment involving executives, technical staff, marketing leads, and finance participants.

"One of the best takeaways for me was making executives realize the wide-reaching impacts of a cybersecurity incident," said Paul Rapier. "It's not just about stolen data; incidents could disrupt game-day events or even fan experiences."

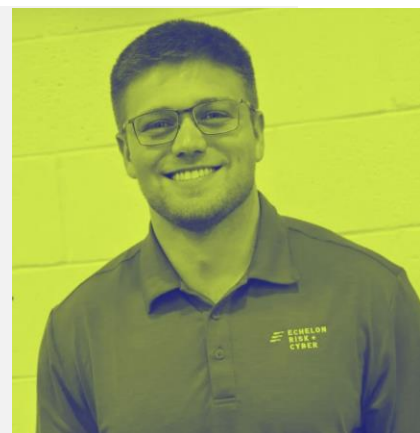


Josh Fleming, who facilitated the exercise alongside John Blanzky, emphasized the importance of creating alignment between all participants.

"Incident response efforts transcend beyond the technical team; they require the coordination of every aspect of an organization," Fleming explained. "We helped clarify roles and highlight the importance of cross-departmental coordination. Exercises such as this one are vital in building muscle memory to make rapid, unified decisions under pressure."

John Blanzky noted that participants also recognized the nuances of addressing double extortion ransom scenarios.

"We introduced the game theory logic of a 'pay versus don't pay' strategy and the complexities that go into making that decision. This forced the participants to think critically about legal, financial, situational, and reputational implications," shared Blanzky.



Policy Refinement Strengthens Audit Readiness

The Pistons' policy framework, although initially drafted internally, required refinement to meet the advanced security and compliance demands. Echelon's policy governance retainer delivered just that.

According to Josh Fleming,

"We transformed their basic templates into tailored policy suites for areas such as network security, access control, and vulnerability management. These didn't just meet best practices; they were designed to support the Pistons' specific operational needs and serve a functional purpose."

Well-drafted policies immediately improved their audit preparation. "We mapped everything using NIST frameworks," said Blanzky. "This made it easier for them to identify gaps, improve compliance, and be more prepared for audits."

During the tabletop exercise, the policies were put to the test, driving further iteration and strengthening. Rapier recounted, "Going through those policies in action showed us blind spots we missed previously. This would have never been clear without a real-world simulation."

Strategic Roadmapping Empowers Long-Term Maturity

At its core, Echelon's partnership with the Pistons wasn't just transactional, but transformational.

Josh Fleming stressed the strategic importance of the collaboration:

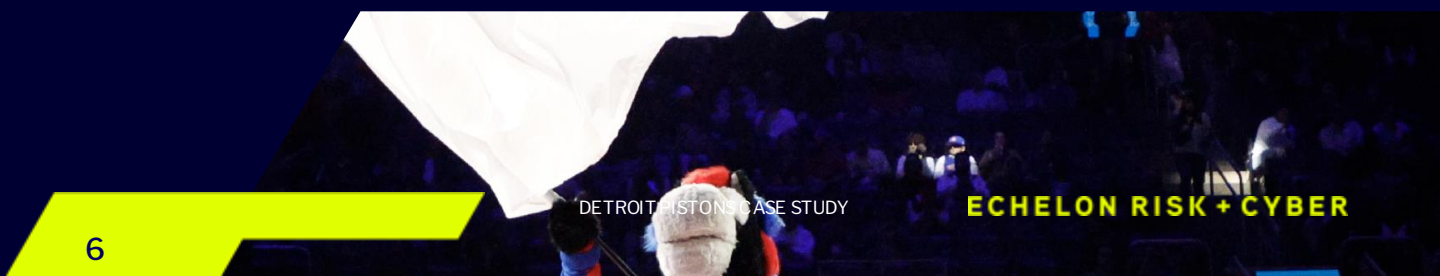
"We made certain the Pistons had clarity on their goals—not just for today but for the future," he said. "It's about combining tactical wins with long-term vision."



Devin Jones echoed the same, stressing the depth of experience Echelon brought to the table.

"From creating recommendations to hands-on support, our approach wasn't just consultative. We ensured their IT team felt empowered to scale on its own."

Rapier was particularly impressed with Echelon's ability to operate as an extension of his small team of five IT professionals. "They stepped in where we didn't have capacity and gave us the insights we needed without making us feel overwhelmed," he stated. "It freed us up to focus on our broader objectives confidently."



Achieving Resilience Through Measurable Cybersecurity Wins

The Pistons' partnership with Echelon has yielded substantial progress that speaks to measurable outcomes:

- **Enhanced Audit Readiness:**
Achieved smoother compliance audits from NBA directives and aligning to NIST frameworks
- **Improved Infrastructure Security:** Reduced of critical vulnerabilities tied to legacy systems
- **Stronger Incident Management:**
Strengthened cross-departmental alignment and preparation for real-world crises
- **Cultural Transformation:**
Established a cybersecurity culture that fosters collaboration between technical and non-technical teams



“Collectively, we’ve grown as an organization. It’s not just about plugging holes anymore.

We have a deeper understanding of how to evolve as threats become more sophisticated.”

- Paul Rapier, VP of IT, Detroit Pistons

Continuing the Journey Toward Cybersecurity Maturity

The Pistons and Echelon aren't stopping here. Planned initiatives include recurring tabletop exercises, annual NBA security audits, and ongoing policy enhancements.

Paul Rapier said:

"Cybersecurity is an evolving field. We'll continue building on this momentum to stay ahead of the curve, and Echelon will remain core to that process."



The Detroit Pistons' story illustrates how combining strategy with execution can elevate organizational resilience. Through tailored services, hands-on support, and a commitment to education, Echelon ensures the Pistons are equipped to tackle today's challenges with confidence while slowly transforming into a cybersecurity leader in their space.

"In the end, this partnership isn't just about preventing breaches," concluded Rapier. "It's about ensuring the team, the fanbase, and the organization are respected and protected. And Echelon has been the perfect teammate in driving that mission forward."



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