

# CREATING AN OPSEC CULTURE

By

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: I was asked by Louis Fuse, Editor of *The OPSEC Journal*, to write an article and share with the readers some of the techniques and products that the U.S. Department of Energy, Nevada Operations Office (DOE/NV), has used to create an OPSEC "culture" through awareness. First, I would like to dispel the notion that it is expensive to maintain a good OPSEC awareness program. As you will read, there are resources available, and what is important is how those resources are utilized. Second, throughout the article I will emphasize some important fundamentals: keep an open mind and let your imagination work for you; seek the help of others; and take advantage of all that our technology has to offer.

Since the beginning of the OPSEC program at DOE/NV, we have maintained a database of OPSEC vulnerabilities and concerns that were identified as a result of OPSEC assessments ("surveys" to many of you). The significance of this database is what it reveals after more than 160 such assessments -- that, with few exceptions, implementing a countermeasure also involves OPSEC awareness in some manner. Therefore, whether your OPSEC program is in its infancy, or whether it has matured into a viable program, creating an OPSEC culture (or "mind set") through OPSEC awareness is essential.

For most of us, OPSEC is a part-time responsibility. But we would be remiss if we fail to target the rank-and-file within our organization...for it is they who are the conduit for a visible, dynamic, and provocative OPSEC Program. One of the dilemmas facing the OPSEC practitioner is how to reach a typically large employee population and educate them on a topic that few truly understand and even fewer are acutely interested in. OPSEC briefings rarely play to standing-room-only audiences, but regulations and world events mandate us to educate people on threats, vulnerabilities, and countermeasures.

An OPSEC awareness program is a living program that must adapt and flex to the needs of the organization and the changing climate. To maintain OPSEC awareness we must make it appear fresh and dynamic, requiring imagination and some forward thinking, and by using every media bag-of-tricks at our disposal. To do that means using a multi-pronged publicity blitz toward the goal of creating an organizational culture in which OPSEC is ingrained in everyone from the janitor to the senior manager.

This article shares some initiatives championed by DOE/NV, and will present component media that we have used to educate and heighten OPSEC awareness. The shopping list includes audio-visual products, printed media of all sorts, gimmicks (including edibles) and novelties that have returned mega-bang for the buck.

## Audiovisual

**Video.** There are some good ones, but a presenter's introduction is normally met with moans, groans, and seat squirming to find a comfortable position for a brief check of one's eyelids for holes.

Videos should be brief, fast-paced, and integrated into a presentation. Above all, videos should not be introduced with an apology.

Carefully chosen vignettes from a video (or videos) integrated with an extemporaneous presentation works best. In the past few years, the popular network “news magazine” shows have unknowingly done the OPSEC community a great service by airing stories that help build credibility by publicizing real-world events employees can relate to. It is one thing to stand in front of an audience and generalize about the threat . . . it is yet another to SHOW them examples.

Critically-screened video enhances and reinforces the extemporaneous podium speaker who should have already been established as a subject matter expert. Choose clips that illustrate the topic in real world terms that relate to the audience. The key is integration. Not only must the material be germane to the topic, but it must be carefully placed in the architecture of the overall presentation to complement what comes before and after.

**Computer-Based Training (CBT).** As security training budgets continue to shrink, OPSEC practitioners must realize that stand-up presentations to large employee populations are no longer cost-effective. Similarly, those who opt for “mail-outs” to satisfy annual refresher requirements know that they are merely “filling a square.”

There are several software packages on the market for developing high quality computer-based training and briefing products. The attractiveness of these programs is that they do not require computer programming skills. CBT, especially those authoring packages that the layperson can use, hold tremendous economies-of-scale that make them very attractive.

CBTs are user-friendly and can be easily navigated. The medium is strictly self-paced and instructional material need not be completed during a single session. Best of all, results are measurable. Progress checks can be added to your CBT so users (and you) can track how well students understand the material.

There are advantages as well as disadvantages to computer based training.

Advantages include:

- Uniform information delivery
- Program format and content easy to change
- Ability to integrate graphics, text, special effects, animation, and sound
- Minimal need for “instructors”
- A user-friendly medium
- Self-paced
- Measurable results

Disadvantages of computer based training are:

- products that feature motion video may require more powerful hardware
- the medium can be intimidating for non-computer users
- slow student throughput may be experienced unless it is network deliverable
- it is impersonal and eliminates the opportunity for questions

Venture prudently into this domain and do your homework thoroughly. CBT has tremendous value so long as you understand its complexities and idiosyncrasies at the front end.

**Presentation Software.** I am an OPSEC practitioner, not a graphics illustrator or computer programmer yet, because of software, I have the capability to produce high quality color posters, presentations, pamphlets, handouts, and other visual media on the personal computer. There are many graphics design packages on the market that allow the user to quickly and easily produce top quality presentations. Most software

packages provide scaleable fonts, an endless choice of colors, and pre-loaded clip art that will enhance any product you might want to create.

The product is professional and sends a clear signal to the audience that your organization is a class act. These programs are truly cost-effective and the dollar investment required will not break the bank either.

***Presentation Delivery Methods:*** The most popular are viewgraphs, 35mm slides, flip charts, and computer-generated vehicles discussed above. It is well known that top-quality aids are essential to guide and reinforce a presentation. Their prudent use is encouraged. Hard copy viewgraphs have obvious limited utility because any change in content means they have to be revised and reprinted. Ditto for 35mm slides, but add cost and other logistical anomalies and you have a medium that has had its run.

Carefully structured color presentations become highly portable when used with a laptop computer and projection panel hardware and, best of all, last-minute changes are quick and easy.

***Guest Speakers:*** Have you ever been embarrassed by an invited speaker who promised a fascinating topic, but whose delivery skills were not up to the task? We all have! Recognizing that previewing a presentation is very difficult before you invite the speaker, check around the community for “referrals” from someone you trust. If the podium skills of the speaker are lacking, you are much better off to pass rather than wasting the audience’s time and getting a programmatic black eye in the process.

## **Printed Media**

If you really want to push OPSEC, you need a visual blitz as a constant reminder to practice the discipline throughout the work

day. In this context, printed media goes well beyond the traditional bulletin board postings, tabloid articles, and posters. Conspicuous, yet unobtrusive, OPSEC reminders can be printed (yes, even on a personal computer) on peel-and-stick stock and placed in a variety of locations to remind employees to think about OPSEC in their daily activities.

Examples include:

- “Be OPSEC Aware” or “Think OPSEC” stickers on office and cellular phones, and two-way radios, reminding users not to discuss classified or sensitive unclassified information.
- “Be OPSEC Aware” or “Think OPSEC” stickers on copiers, modems, facsimile machines, computer monitors, cipher locks or, literally, anywhere sensitive information is processed, stored, or discussed.
- OPSEC awareness signs in conference and meeting rooms, along with reminders to erase white boards.
- Office trash containers can have a sticker reminding employees to “Think OPSEC” before discarding sensitive material, or that it is “Better Shred than Read.”
- At DOE/NV, we provide each new employee with a small “Pocket Guide to OPSEC” as a handy reference. The pocket guide briefly addresses the salient elements associated with the OPSEC program.
- Cartoon features. “Arnold OPSEC” was developed as a visual medium based upon the old adage that “a picture is worth a thousand words.”

Arnold is depicted in a variety of situations where he carelessly violates sound OPSEC practice. The

situations were revealed as actual concerns identified during the conduct of OPSEC assessments.

We are often asked how much we pay a professional cartoonist. The original Arnold features were drawn by an employee within our company who had artistic ability (I would like to re-emphasize the importance of tapping the resources within your own organization). The features were scanned and are stored in a database. Using presentation software described earlier, features are now produced by OPSEC practitioners by cut-and-paste; color can be added quickly and easily changed, images can also be “flip-flopped.” New, colorful, features can therefore be produced in a short period of time by the OPSEC practitioner.

The cartoon features were enhanced recently by transferring them to video tape, complete with voice-overs (the voice characterizations were done by OPSEC practitioners). DOE/NV now uses the video version as “distractions” or “break-fillers” in other presentations. The OPSEC message is spread even during non-security related training.

- Newsletters or in-house tabloid articles are still effective methods for spreading the OPSEC gospel. Publish printed articles with the author’s permission or draft your own on OPSEC topics germane to the local situation and audience. Anecdotal articles are best because the reader can better relate to real people, real organizations, and real situations rather than being forced to grasp abstract concepts or OPSEC principles. DOE/NV has found (though it should come as no revelation) that real-world situations drive the point home much better than

prognostications of an OPSEC practitioner who may be viewed as “crying wolf” because of self-serving motives. Real-life evidence abounds to emphasize the point that the loss of sensitive information leads to the loss of the country’s technological and economic world leadership and has cost this nation literally millions of jobs.

- Bulletins are yet another medium that can be used to sustain OPSEC awareness, although they should be done with great care. A good rule for bulletins is to limit the length to what people are likely to take the time to read . . . no more than one page.

DOE/NV and its contractors often distribute brief articles extracted from newspapers, magazines, and such periodicals as the “OPS News,” published by the OPSEC Professionals Society, and “The OPSEC Indicator,” published by the Interagency OPSEC Support Staff. The Internet is also another source for information and articles.

Bulletins with a cover letter from the manager are even more effective. The message here is high-level support and some words on why the information is being transmitted is important to the reader. A quarterly mailing may be more effective (and, perhaps easier to gather appropriate material for) than a monthly mailing, but try it for yourself and assess the results.

A DOE/NV contractor, Bechtel Nevada, recently went paperless by using the local area network as a means to distribute the quarterly bulletins.

**Internet:** The Internet is a tremendous resource and opportunity to enhance your OPSEC program. Not only does the Internet

afford you access to volumes of information, it can also provide you with graphics, animation, and sound to use in your presentations and computer-based briefings. You do not need to be a computer programmer to take advantage of this revolution, and there is no need to be intimidated by it. If you do not know where to begin, tap the resources within your organization (have we mentioned this before?). Very likely you will locate someone who will help you learn how to use the technology -- and a side benefit is that they may become another OPSEC disciple.

### **Gimmicks and Novelties**

This is where imagination, creativity, and ingenuity can be put to the test to gain maximum OPSEC program visibility at the lowest cost.

- *Contests:* Running OPSEC contests is a way to keep OPSEC in the limelight and interest piqued. As an example, a contest focusing on how easy it is to piece bits of unclassified information gathered from phone calls, facsimile machines, trash, and by word of mouth, and to then determine the critical and sensitive information, is a fun way for employees to get involved in OPSEC. Use your local newsletter to publish a piece of unclassified information (indicators/pathways) in several consecutive issues. Challenge the employees to see if they can determine what the critical project is by having them gather all the bits of unclassified information. Publicize the winner in the newsletter and give them an OPSEC prize. This type of gimmick costs nothing but a little time to write the articles.
- *OPSEC “Edibles:”* Yes, there are such things and they do not require FDA approval. Fortune Cookies. This novelty started by approaching

our on-site cafeteria vendor. Fortune cookies were provided whenever a Chinese entree was being served. The cafeteria manager agreed to order fortune cookies with an OPSEC message inside. The message inside can be “Be OPSEC Aware,” “Loose Lips Sink Ships,” “Think OPSEC,” or anything else that is appropriate. Fortune Cookies are also used to break the ice at annual refresher briefings.

OPSECicles. Yes, “OPSECicles.” Popsicles are a tradition at the annual company picnic. Instead “OPSECicles” – popsicles with an OPSEC message on the stick --were substituted. A bit hokey you say? Perhaps, but it is another way to raise OPSEC consciousness and draw attention to the program.

### **Gauging the Level of OPSEC Consciousness**

Within DOE/NV, the level of OPSEC awareness is evaluated during periodic security surveys.

The DOE/NV OPSEC Program Manager participates as a member of the periodic security survey team, along with physical, personnel, and other security specialists. At the subject facility, the OPSEC Program Manager selects employees at random and administers a 20-question test. Question responses include true-false, multiple choice, and fill-in. Question topics cover the full range of OPSEC, from critical information, threats, assessments, to countermeasures. Seventy-five percent is required for individuals to successfully pass the test, and an overall average of 75% is required for the facility to successfully pass.

High quality OPSEC presentations, briefings, and products are essential to the credibility of an OPSEC program. Today’s employee expects, no, deserves clear, concise, relevant, and professionally delivered presentations.

OPSEC practitioners need to create a culture where the employees go forth as the foot soldiers of their programs.

But something is still missing. The electronic message board outside our cafeteria states "S E C \_ \_ I T Y, WHAT'S MISSING?" The answer is "U R." The same is true for OPSEC. Don't be the missing piece...sharing your ideas with others. OPSEC practitioners reinforce the foundation of OPSEC. When you share ideas and products you also reap the benefits from the ideas and products of others.

### **Now It's Up to You!**

The goal of this article was not to tell you how to do it, but to share our experiences in the hope that you may be able to draw upon some idea to enhance your own program. We are mindful that what may work for us may not work for you -- keep an open mind, let your imagination work for you, seek the help of others, and take advantage of all that our technology has to offer.

### **We Would Like to Hear From You**

The DOE/NV OPSEC Program Office would like to hear from you about your ideas and suggestions. A follow up article outlining ideas as well as those who suggested them, will appear in a future issue.

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