



Cyvergence Executive Series

The Aspiring CISO's Roadmap to Success

The Journey Beyond Technical Leadership

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The Executive Reality

Most aspiring CISOs prepare by becoming exceptional cybersecurity leaders. They earn certifications, master frameworks, and build experience across governance, risk, compliance.

Technical excellence alone is rarely enough.

The average CISO remains in the role for only 14 to 24 months—one of the shortest executive tenures. Many discover that the greatest challenges are not technical—they are executive, organizational, and business challenges.

At Cyvergence, our mission is to help cybersecurity leaders build the executive capabilities that contribute to longer, more successful CISO careers.

No two CISO roles are the same.



1. The Road to Executive Readiness

Organizations differ in culture, governance, executive expectations, business models, and risk appetite.

Preparing for one specific CISO role is nearly impossible. Developing executive readiness is not.

This roadmap highlights the executive capabilities that consistently help cybersecurity leaders succeed across organizations.



1. Business Acumen

Successful CISOs understand more than cybersecurity—they understand the organizations they serve. Business acumen is the ability to align cybersecurity with business strategy, executive priorities, and organizational objectives. Without it, sound recommendations can remain strategically disconnected.



Why It Matters

Technical credibility may earn a seat at the table. Business credibility helps you contribute to executive decisions.



Key Focal Areas

- Understanding business strategy
- Financial literacy and investment thinking
- Governance and enterprise risk
- Business capability mapping
- Strategic prioritization



2. Executive Communication

Executive communication is about translating cybersecurity into information that helps executives and boards make informed decisions. Successful CISOs connect cybersecurity to business priorities, risk, and organizational impact. They tailor their message to the audience without sacrificing clarity or accuracy.



Why It Matters

Clear, audience-focused communication builds credibility and helps leaders make better decisions.



Key Focal Areas

- Executive & Board Communication
- Storytelling & Business Writing
- Risk Communication
- Active Listening
- Difficult Conversations



3. Executive Judgement

Executive judgment is the ability to make sound decisions when the path forward is unclear. Successful CISOs balance cybersecurity, business objectives, risk, and organizational realities to help leaders make informed decisions. They recognize that every decision involves tradeoffs.



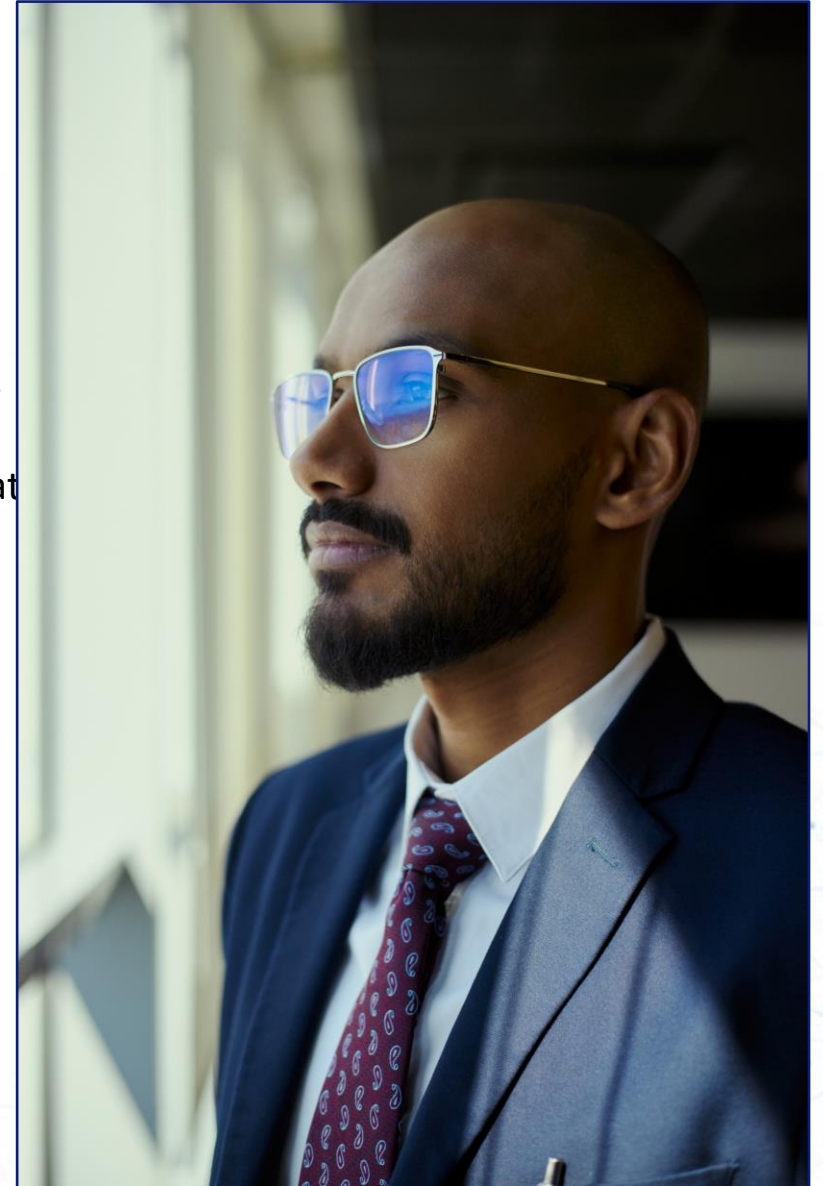
Why It Matters

Organizations trust leaders who consistently help them make better decisions—not simply more secure ones.



Key Focal Areas

- Decision-Making Under Uncertainty
- Critical Thinking
- Ethical Reasoning
- Business Case Development
- Understanding Tradeoffs



4. Executive Influence

Executive influence is the ability to build trust, shape discussions, and gain support without relying on formal authority. Successful CISOs influence through credibility, relationships, emotional intelligence, and executive presence. They help others move toward better decisions.



Why It Matters

Influence determines whether cybersecurity helps shape executive strategy or simply reacts to decisions made elsewhere.



Key Focal Areas

- Executive Presence
- Relationship Building
- Influence Without Authority
- Negotiations
- Emotional Intelligence



5. Executive Navigation

Executive navigation is the ability to move initiatives forward by understanding the environment in which decisions are made. Successful CISOs recognize organizational dynamics, adapt to cultures, and navigate complexity without compromising integrity or mission. Every organization requires a unique approach.



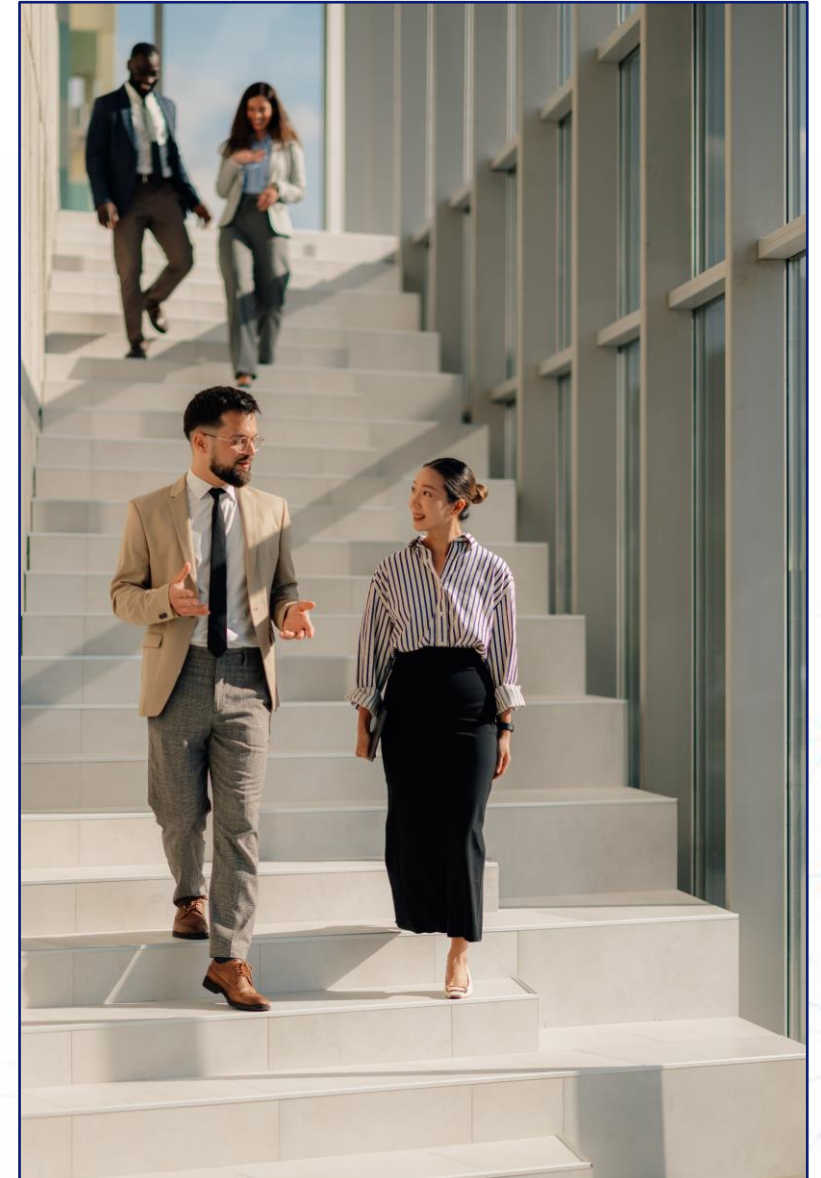
Why It Matters

Organizations—not technology—ultimately determine whether good ideas become successful outcomes.



Key Focal Areas

- Organizational Awareness
- Reading the Room
- Organizational Dynamics
- Change Leadership
- Conflict Management



The Organizational Minefield

The hardest problems will not always be cybersecurity problems. You will face competing agendas, hidden incentives, politics, career pressures, difficult personalities, and power structures. People may support you publicly and undermine you privately. **Decisions may be shaped by realities no one will ever say out loud.**

The Reality

- You can be technically right and still **lose the decision.**
- You can have a seat at the table and still **not be part of the conversation.**
- You can carry responsibility for outcomes you **do not have the authority to control.**

The Deeper Challenge

Can you recognize what is really happening around you before it costs you the decision—or the role?



Are You Prepared for the Minefield?

Technical expertise may get you into the CISO role. It won't tell you what is really happening around you—or how to respond when the answer isn't obvious.

01 — Can You Read the Environment?

Can you identify who really influences a decision, recognize competing incentives, and understand what is happening beyond the formal organizational structure?

02 — Can You Navigate the People?

Can you recognize politics, power, difficult personalities, and conflicting agendas—and navigate without compromising your integrity?

03 — Can You Influence the Outcome?

Can you challenge powerful people, influence decisions you don't control, and recognize when your own assumptions or biases are affecting your judgment?

Knowing cybersecurity is not the same as being ready to operate at the executive level.



Executive Readiness

The roadmap is not about mastering five independent skills. It is about developing the executive capabilities that consistently help cybersecurity leaders succeed across organizations.

No roadmap can prepare you for every CISO role because no two organizations are the same. It can help you build capabilities that strengthen executive effectiveness and prepare you to adapt wherever your career takes you.

That is the objective of executive readiness.



Executive Readiness In Action



Audy Bautista • 1st

CISSP, CCISO, CISM | SVP of Security Operations at Thrive | Cybersecurity Lead...
9mo •

My passion for continuous learning led me to the "Becoming the Next Generation CISO" course from [Cyvergence](#), and it was excellent. The five-day course was intense, but the pace was manageable and the content was outstanding. I highly recommend it for any current or aspiring cybersecurity executive.

Here are my biggest takeaways:

- The instructor, [Matthew Webster](#), shares practical context from his career as a CISO. His stories and lessons learned were the highlight.
- The sessions went beyond tech, covering practical financial concepts, corporate culture, strategic governance, risk management, and how to navigate board-level challenges.
- For me, the most important parts were the focus on communication, emotional intelligence, executive presence, and using storytelling to build business cases. These are the skills that bridge the gap between technical management and executive leadership.

Audy's Testimonial



Holly Bond • 1st

Senior Cybersecurity Leader | Cyber Threat Intelligence | Incident Response | V...
8mo • Edited •

🔥 Proud Leadership Moment

I just wrapped up something that will heavily influence me as a stronger cybersecurity leader. It was something I knew I was missing...

There are more and more discussions around "Cybersecurity isn't just a technical discipline anymore - it's a business function".
And everyone tells CISOs: "Translate cyber risk into business risk"
...but almost no one teaches how to actually do that. What does that even mean?

That's why I enrolled in [Matthew Webster's](#) Becoming the Next Generation CISO (BNGC) course, and it delivered exactly what I and our industry has been missing, IMO.

Here's what I walked away with:

- ✓ Real-world financial modeling - BCA + VaR
- ✓ Governance that lands with executives
- ✓ Clearly linking cyber to business outcomes via a business mindset & language
- ✓ Emotional intelligence for influencing leadership
- ✓ Tools I can use immediately at the executive table

✚ The CCISO certification teaches everything a CISO must know technically. BNGC course teaches what a CISO must know to lead cyber from a business

Holly's Testimonial

Your Next Steps

Executive readiness begins with understanding where you are today. From there, you can build a plan for where you want to go next.



Schedule a Conversation

Discuss your leadership journey, current challenges, and practical next steps toward executive development.

[Schedule a Conversation](#)



Continue Exploring

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[Watch BNGC Overview](#)

Built on Executive Experience

This roadmap reflects nearly 30 years of IT and cybersecurity experience, including serving as a multi-time Chief Information Security Officer. It draws on leading cybersecurity programs, advising executives and boards, and developing cybersecurity leaders to succeed beyond technology.

- **Multi-Time Chief Information Security Officer**
- International keynote speaker
- Author of *Do No Harm: Protecting Connected Medical Devices, Healthcare, and Data From Hackers and Adversarial Nation States*
- Creator of the **Becoming the Next Generation CISO (BNGC)** program
- Developer of **Executive Organizational Navigation (EON)**



Matthew Webster

Founder, CEO, & CISO, Cyvergence

[Connect on LinkedIn](#)

[Schedule a Conversation](#)

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