Cybersecurity is a critical part of any organisation’s security posture, particularly in the wake of the pandemic that opened up numerous unexpected vulnerabilities for organisations around the world.

Lightstone, a leader in data management, analytics and solutions that enable better business processes and decision making, recognised the importance of embedding security awareness and education into the fabric of its culture four years before 2020 hit, but used the year to pivot on posture and make the human element – the weakest security element – even more of a priority. According to George Palmer, Group Technology Officer at Lightstone, the company embarked on a multi-faceted security approach to ensure that security didn’t leave people out of the equation.

“We’ve long recognised that people are the weakest part of any security posture, and therefore implement robust policies and procedures to ensure that security always remains top of mind,” he explains. “You can do what you want with your perimeter, but if your employees and users don’t understand what you’re doing, then your business remains vulnerable. In 2020, as more and more people moved to working from home, we saw this as an opportunity to reinforce our security posture, training and approaches, especially because we were managing more than 300 people across four geographic locations and multiple teams with different training requirements.”

The Requirements

Palmer wanted a platform that would not only empower his people and achieve the reach required by the geographic spread and numbers of people, but one that could be customised to meet very specific requirements.

“We needed something reliable and accessible that would help users understand the cyber risks and the impact their behaviour has on our cyber posture, without making them feel patronised,” says Palmer. “People were not on board with endless policy releases, and demands on their time.”

For Palmer, it was also important that the platform use localised content – he wanted the content to be relevant to South African users, to talk the same language, and to connect with local audiences. This was a key selling point for KnowBe4 as the content was localised and a great content delivery system that would flow to the right teams with the right information, and we needed great content that was relevant to these teams.”

The company had implemented numerous policies and embarked on many programmes to educate employees over the years, but these had limited reach and engagement. They didn’t meet the expectations of management or employees, and the culture wasn’t open to the training solutions, posters and platforms that were currently in use. The company needed a social engineering tool that would not just deliver the right content at the right time, but provide people with intelligent and relevant content that was of value to them.

“With the KnowBe4 social engineering platform, we manage everything ourselves which makes it easier for us to control and to customise. I’ve looked at other systems and they don’t have the functionality and reach that KnowBe4 has given us.”

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relevant, it was also available on multiple platforms, another key requirement for the Lightstone team.

“We wanted the content to run across multiple platforms so that people could access it on multiple devices and from different locations,” says Palmer. “It was also important that the platform and its content remained under our control. With the KnowBe4 social engineering platform, we manage everything ourselves which makes it easier for us to control and to customise. I’ve looked at other systems and they don’t have the functionality and reach that KnowBe4 has given us.”

**What Success Looks Like**

“We are at a point now where we have management buy-in, so our managers are held accountable for staff being properly trained and ensuring that their teams do the training,” says Palmer. “Security is now acknowledged as vital to the business. At first, shifting the culture was hard, but now people are on board with the processes and approaches we’ve put in place with KnowBe4. It took us two weeks to get it installed and set up in the way we wanted. It was super quick to implement, and the new user onboarding process is incredibly smart – people are up and running within minutes.”

“You can throw tons of training at people and do desk drops, but what’s the measurement to see if it’s effective?” asks Palmer. “With KnowBe4, we have phishing simulations and tests that assess people’s knowledge on a regular basis and that helps us to identify those who are struggling, or not doing the training. Another massive benefit of the KnowBe4 platform is the ability to benchmark the results of these tests against other companies and industries. I can show the Board how this investment is having an impact and making a material difference to behavioural values.”

The KnowBe4 benefit extends to how the content is delivered. The content is local, it’s available across multiple platforms, can be customised by Lightstone to suit their own cybersecurity requirements and policy administration, and is immensely engaging. The bullet point lists and tedious policy processes are replaced with a platform that turns the necessary into the interesting.

“The policy acceptance aspect is perfect and working really well and I no longer have to track the hundreds of compliance requirements that I used to do manually,” says Palmer. “Now if I want to do ISO 27001, for example, with 100 statements to comply with, I can manage the process with the KnowBe4 Compliance Manager. This not only allocates specific elements to the right people, but it makes it simple for us to implement POPIA and GDPR. Plus, if auditors need information it can be provided in hours, not weeks.”

The success of the Lightstone KnowBe4 implementation has had far reaching results. The teams are more engaged, management has bought into the process and it is driving employee participation, while compliance is managed far more effectively, and simply. It has also seen international recognition thanks to the overall cybersecurity posture of the South African business, and the benefits are felt by the IT team.

“It gave me great satisfaction that we’ve been contacted by other companies in the Lightstone Group asking to replicate our model of dealing with cyber risk,” concludes Palmer. “The other companies are looking to us for advice and recommendations on how we achieved what our shareholders perceive as a great success story. We’ve worked hard to completely revitalise our security posture, and the KnowBe4 collaboration has played a significant role in helping us to achieve our goals.”

The platform selected by Lightstone included the KnowBe4 Policy Management toolkit and the Phishing Security Test and the company now plans to implement the governance, risk and compliance platform over the next few years. The entire implementation was a success story that has ticked all the right customer satisfaction boxes for the company.