



## Highlights

- Reduction of PPP from 36% to 2.2%
- Ability to mature a security awareness program year-over-year and prepare users for more challenging social engineering and phishing schemes
- Creation of an internal security culture that encourages a relationship between users and IT dept

## Overview

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities is a strategic action network that works with and through its network of social sector leaders to achieve a healthy and equitable society, ensuring policies and systems provide equal access and opportunity for health and well-being, economic opportunity, educational success, and safety and security.

The organization serves as an incubator for learning and innovation to generate new solutions to society's toughest problems and aggregates the very best sector knowledge. It also accelerates change through dynamic leadership development and collective action.

## Finding Security Awareness

As they approached October 2017, Gwen Mueller and Heather Lukaszewski, the Alliance's director of IT and systems administrator and supervisor, respectively, were committed to bringing a security mindset to their 110 employees. Because the Alliance works with both physical and mental health records, employees had been stepped through formal HIPAA training, but had not embraced a culture of security awareness.

"We were interested in building up our human firewall," says Lukaszewski, who had attended a nonprofit technology conference in March 2017 where security awareness training had been recommended by a colleague. "I understood that to make an organization secure, you have to invest in your people. KnowBe4 was recommended to me as a tool for training our staff to help keep threats away."

Lukaszewski did her homework on vendors and recommended to Mueller that they reach out to KnowBe4 and do a trial of both the company's SAT tool and its simulated phishing offer. "KnowBe4 was the biggest player in the market and their sales team was very efficient and helpful."

That trial test showed the Alliance just what it was working with. According to Mueller, "The trial provided us with our baseline Phish-Prone Percentage™ (PPP), which shows how many of our users were fooled into clicking on a simulated phishing test. When we saw that our PPP was 36%, we knew that investing in KnowBe4's ongoing security awareness training program that was supported by simulated phishing tests was critical to achieving success."

### Building a Human Firewall

With the goal of folding security awareness into the Alliance's organizational culture and a high Phish-Prone Percentage, Mueller and Lukaszewski got to work training the staff and enriching their security posture with a highly-trained human firewall.

To make the most of their SAT program, they approached it with growth in mind. "We started in October 2017 and wanted to use year one as an introduction to the tool and to kick off our cybersecurity awareness program. We always knew that we would ratchet things up for year two, which is where we are today," says Lukaszewski.

Their scaffolded approach worked. In their first year, the IT department informed users that they would be doing monthly training and simulated phishing tests, and they reported out quarterly on the program's results. "By the end of 12 months of working with KnowBe4, we saw our PPP drop from over 35% down to 2.2%. It's been amazing what consistent, smart training and testing with fresh content can do."

Now that the Alliance has had its one-year anniversary with KnowBe4, the organization has increased the complexity of its simulated phishing tests and incorporated immediate trainings for users who mistakenly fall for a spoof. "KnowBe4 has allowed us to mature our program and build up that human firewall we wanted with security skills that really work. The Phish Alert Button tunes us in to actual threats in the wild and helps us create custom phishing templates that are very realistic. Our goal this year is to make our tests harder because we know that hackers don't just send attachments or bad links. They start conversations and social engineer people; we are working with KnowBe4 to train our users to not respond to emails, to avoid smishing and vishing threats and more," says Lukaszewski.

As with any program that increases in complexity, the Alliance understood that its 2.2% PPP was going to change. With harder tests, Mueller and Lukaszewski have seen that number start to climb but know it's temporary. "By employing that automated, immediate remediation training, we know that it's only a matter of time before our PPP is back down to 2%. It's our job to make sure our people are cognizant and skeptical of

threats so they can stay secure, and KnowBe4 is helping us do just that," says Mueller.

### Better Connection with IT

Increasing awareness about security practices and protocols were the main goals of the Alliance's SAT program with KnowBe4. Lukaszewski and Mueller, however, had a broader vision that KnowBe4 has proven very helpful in achieving.

"We understand that part of the role of our IT department is to help keep our organization secure. For us to really embrace a culture of security, we have to drive communication between our users and our IT department. KnowBe4 has proven to be very effective in helping us drive rapport and trust between these two groups and foster a stronger security culture internally," said Mueller.

To achieve this goal, Mueller and Lukaszewski asked their users to phone IT directly if they failed a simulated phishing test. Mueller stated, "KnowBe4's platform already alerts IT if a test is failed, but we want to promote good behaviors and get our users to understand that if something goes wrong in the real world, they must call IT right away. IT is not going to yell at them if they make a mistake; IT is going to help them solve the problem and protect the organization." This approach also creates an environment that encourages users to not cover it up if they do mistakenly click a bad link or respond to a phishing email.

With their users regularly being sent phishing tests and receiving both automatic remedial and scheduled trainings, Mueller and Lukaszewski can appreciate the usability of the KnowBe4 platform. According to Mueller, "KnowBe4 makes it simple to do really important and complex trainings that build up an organization's security posture. The usability of the platform is very strong; we are able to create custom templates very easily and challenge our users even more. And we love the fact that KnowBe4 consistently adds new content so we can keep our trainings and our simulated tests fresh. KnowBe4 has been a wonderful partner and one that we expect to continue working with for a long time."