Information Security versus Cybersecurity – What's the Difference?

For the novice, technology, its terms and concepts can be quite complex. As an expert and consultant in Information Security, Privacy and Risk Management, I take complex technology terms and concepts and make them understandable to juries and clients alike. Let's examine the differences between information security and cybersecurity. While many think these terms have the same meaning and often use them interchangeably, they are not the same.

Information Security

As mentioned above, information security, or infosec, is different than cybersecurity. Information security is focused on the triad of confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data. In fact, the NIST website defines infosec as *the protection of information and information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction in order to provide confidentiality, integrity, and availability*. For the record, NIST is the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Infosec experts focus on protecting and controlling access to data through technology, process and procedures, controlled access and compliance verification. In general, information security is a broader category than cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), cybersecurity is the art of protecting networks, devices and data from unauthorized access or criminal use. These attacks can occur through a third party or from within an organization. A professional who is responsible for cybersecurity must focus on several areas of cyber risk. Examples include, but may not be limited to, security of networks, hosted software applications, cloud-based systems and other technology infrastructure.

The Differences

One of the differences between information security and cybersecurity is that cybersecurity is generally focused on protecting electronic data as it is processed, transferred and/or stored on networked infrastructure and systems used as part of connectivity to the outside world or cyberspace. Information security focuses more holistically on protecting all of the company's data in its various forms. As an example, the broader infosec program manages security controls for paper information in a filing cabinet or a warehouse full of documents.

Job postings and descriptions also indicate differences in focus between information security and cybersecurity roles in the marketplace. Positions for information security experts typically reflect the focus on the program as a whole and protection of sensitive data wherever it may be. Cybersecurity positions are usually more targeted with an emphasis on protection of electronic data and networked systems from various cyber risks.

Damages

While there is some commonality between these terms and the respective roles in the profession, data protection takes ongoing collaboration between information security and cybersecurity team members. Cybercriminals and other threat actors want data they can monetize. Cyber incidents and data breaches can have devastating consequences for most businesses; both operationally and financially. These activities can lead to litigation and the need for cybersecurity expertise to provide appropriate perspective and opinion. This is an area where I can help. Please contact me to learn more about our services.