A Winning Partnership in Cybersecurity Talent Development

In the modern cybersecurity threat landscape, staying ahead requires constant innovation and investment in talent. Cisco has long been recognized as a leader in technology, and their approach to upskilling and reskilling their workforce is no exception. At the heart of this effort is a strategic partnership with SANS Institute, the world's leading provider of cybersecurity training and certification.

"When I stepped into this role, I looked at our landscape and saw we weren't investing – not from a dollar perspective, in how we upskill and reskill our organization," said LaKetta Hawkins, Leader of Inclusive Workforce Enablement at Cisco's Security & Trust Organization.

Hawkins quickly identified the need to empower existing employees, Empowering existing employees not only enhances their skills but also fosters a sense of loyalty and motivation. "Part of that is letting your employees that are already there be your champions and multipliers. How do you do that? Invest in them," said Hawkins. This approach has significantly boosted workforce morale and retention, as employees feel valued and see clear opportunities for their professional growth within the company.

When presented with the depth and breadth of the SANS training catalog, Cisco was able to create a comprehensive roadmap for educational tracks. "Looking at the SANS portfolio, I thought, this can easily give us a one to five-year roadmap of educational tracks that people can look at," Hawkins explained. This delivers employees clear paths for growth and development that align their professional goals with the needs of the organization.

One of the key factors in this success was the nature of the partnership between Cisco and SANS. "I am really big on building partnerships, not customer relationships. There's a difference," explained Hawkins. This partnership ensures that Cisco receives tailored support and training solutions that meet their specific needs, creating a more innovative and supportive environment.

The results speak for themselves. "We're at a 90% pass rate when individuals take their GIAC certifications," Hawkins shared. GIAC and other certifications help retention by showcasing the effectiveness of training and the dedication of Cisco's workforce to their professional development.

Securing technology workforces is only part of the story at Cisco. "I have two big initiatives: driving technical excellence within our organization and increasing our diversity," said Hawkins. SANS's efforts in promoting diversity through its scholarships and academies have been instrumental in supporting these initiatives, contributing to a more inclusive and skilled cybersecurity workforce.

The power of strategic partnerships cannot be understated. The partnership between Cisco and SANS Institute has proven to be a powerful force in advancing cybersecurity talent development. "This not only works just for Cisco, this works for SANS as well because what we then become are multipliers for each other," Hawkins concluded. By aligning goals and working together, Cisco and SANS have created significant advancements for Cisco in cybersecurity talent development, demonstrating the power of collaboration.

Through its partnership with SANS, Cisco leads the way in cybersecurity, workforce development, and organizational growth. This successful collaboration exemplifies how strategic partnerships can drive innovation, empower employees, and ensure a robust and resilient cybersecurity posture.

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