

# SANS Cyber Academy helped growth of Cyber Consultant at e2e-assure

**The SANS Cyber Retraining Academy is a great way to tackle the crying shortage of cybersecurity professionals. UK and Australia based SOC and MDR provider, e2e-assure, can relate.**

“We could never have grown so fast without the Academies specialists.”

In partnership with the UK government, SANS first offered a cyber security retraining programme for people from non-cyber backgrounds in 2015. The aim of that programme was to target and train untapped talent in an effort to reduce the cybersecurity skills gap. A special feature of the SANS Cyber Academy is that students gain both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, enabling them to work in entry-level roles in cybersecurity immediately after graduation. This particular Academy in 2015 consisted of an intensive ten-week course and SANS also provided introductory events and job fairs to bring candidates into contact with companies and vice versa.

## Match with company culture

One of the companies that welcomed graduates with open arms was e2e-assure. Formed in 2013, e2e-assure are a diverse group of currently around 85 people, based in the UK and Australia, focussing on providing SOC-as-a-Service and Managed Detection and Response to organisations of all sizes, with the goal of improving their cyber security. In 2015, CEO and founder Rob Demain attended the introduction day at the Cyber Academy to tap into the pool of new talent. “e2e-assure had existed for only 18 months at that time, but we had enormous potential to grow, but needed a lot more of the right people to do so.” What made it special was that e2e-assure was not only looking for cyber security graduates, but people who would fit in with the company in particular. “We know SANS and know that when people are trained there, they are top-notch. But we didn't want to just check boxes when looking for a new colleague. It was at least as important that we found specialists who fit our culture.”

## From mariner to cybersecurity specialist

One of the people Demain met at the induction event was Academy student Duncan Wright, a former mariner and IT entrepreneur. “As a mariner I worked all over the world, but when I came back to the UK to start a family, I started my own business, as a managed service provider. I had been doing that for 12 years when the opportunity arose to join the SANS Cyber

Academy. I've always had a passion for cybersecurity, so this was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.” Wright was one of the participants in the original Academy in 2015, and although he didn't join e2e-assure immediately after, it only took a few months for him to join the SOC specialist. “The scale of e2e-assure means that I can do and mean more there than I could as an independent contractor.”

“The scale of e2e-assure means that I can do and mean more there than I could as an independent contractor.”

## Cybersecurity is about humans, not IT

He fitted right into the culture of e2e-assure, a culture that values diversity and inclusiveness. It is their non-technical background that makes many of the retrained cyber security specialists add value to e2e-assure. Demain: “How can you hope to solve the complex world of cyber if you don't have different ways of thinking within your company?” That's why e2e-assure has focused on hiring diverse people from the start. Interestingly, adds Wright, “the person with the best results in our SANS class was a former traffic warden - he had never worked in IT before. That goes to show that a technical background is not necessary to become a great cyber security professional.”

Even more so, Wright sees a striking difference between cybersecurity and IT. "IT is about technology and cyber security is about people. It doesn't matter what processes or technologies you work with, it is about the humans on the other side of it. In cybersecurity the human element is critical."

### Getting to know the industry

According to Wright, what was nice about the introduction days was that the focus was not so much on a job as on getting to know each other. "It's good to meet the industry, have conversations and get a feel for companies," he said. He also spoke to Demain that day. "When I got the chance to work at e2e-assure a few months after the course ended, I didn't have to think long about it." Six others from the class of 2015 also found their way to e2e-assure. Another five people from the 2017 batch (SANS ran a second Retraining Academy in partnership with HM Government in 2017) were brought on board. Currently, four Academy graduates still work at the company. Some others have chosen to take new steps in their careers. "For example, Simon Vernon, also from the class of 2015, is now Head of R&D at SANS itself and a SANS instructor," Wright says not without pride. "People will move on in the industry and that's expected, but they also tend to come back to e2e-assure – we've had two people return after leaving", adds Demain.

**"It was a steep learning curve, but the skills I learned at SANS, I could apply on the very first day in my new job."**

### Instructors provide added value

The training was tough, Wright agrees, but very relevant. "It was a steep learning curve, but the skills I learned at SANS, I could apply on the very first day in my new job." One of the best things about the SANS courses, to Wright, were the instructors. "They are real practitioners. None of these 'can't do, can teach' people, but people that are out there in cyber security on a daily basis, specialists, sharing real life examples. That was true added value to me." The quality of the SANS training ensures that companies can tap into an additional source of talent in this way. "Everyone in our industry struggles to find good people. On the one hand, there is the battle for experienced professionals and on the other, the scramble for students just out of university. But the retraining programme of SANS offers an additional way to find good people," says Demain.

### Truly transformative

For Demain, training and development of employees is very important. Within e2e-assure, everyone gets the chance to spend a large portion of their time on personal development. After the Academy, Wright also followed additional courses at SANS. Soon he will take another exam for SEC503, Network Intrusion Analysis. "And later this year I want to take the threat intelligence course in London." For Wright, the Academy has been truly transformative. "I went from being an SME to working in big cyber. Some of our clients and contracts are fantastic. I get to work on worldwide infrastructure. This course really changed my outlook and perspective. I don't think there was anything irrelevant in the Academy. Even the basics that I learned in the SEC401 and SEC504 courses I use on a daily basis."

**"I went from being an SME to working in big cyber. Some of our clients and contracts are fantastic."**

### Growth

For e2e-assure the SANS Cyber Academies meant accelerated growth. "I don't think we could have grown as fast as we did without the talents from the Academy," says Demain. "Due to the fact that we had SANS trained people on board, we were able to boost our recognition and trust to win additional contracts. We were able to benefit from the great reputation of SANS. The best thing is that the Academy people were less experienced when we first hired them, but they rapidly became our experienced people. That really helps us as a business."

Are you interested in the [online assessments](#) or [courses](#) that SANS provides?

Take a look at the SANS Institute's comprehensive website or get in touch with a SANS advisor at [www.sans.org](http://www.sans.org)

### Contact SANS

Email: [emea@sans.org](mailto:emea@sans.org)  
Tel: +44 20 3384 3470  
Address: SANS EMEA,  
PO Box 124, Swansea, SA