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As a cybersecurity practitioner, how do you feel that SANS has supported you as an individual through your cybersecurity career?

SANS was probably the key catalyst in starting my career in cybersecurity. I had always had the desire to work in the industry, but it was not until I participated in a SANS training programme that I developed the confidence to actually do it.

There is a solid structure to the SANS course offerings that range from entry-level, accessible options to advanced, practitioner-focused training, for both the industry in general and many specialist areas within it. What this means, in practice, is that if there's a job-role or area of interest that I want to learn about, and develop my knowledge and skills for, there's most likely a SANS course that covers it, and pitches it at the right level for me.

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You possess a range of GIAC certifications. Please explain why this is a benefit to you as an individual as well as to your organisation.

As an individual, being GIAC certified gives you a level of confidence in yourself. You know, for example, that if you hold the GCIA (GIAC Certified Intrusion Analyst) certification, then you will be lot more comfortable in a situation where you're monitoring network traffic and trying to look for potential threats because you've been tested on it to a high standard and passed.

For my employer, GIAC certifications give them confidence that I've got the right competencies in a given area. They're fully aware of the breadth and depth of SANS training courses and know what it takes to pass a GIAC exam.

Would you recommend SANS to other cybersecurity practitioners?

Yes. SANS training is well-respected within the industry, and for good reason. The content of courses is typically up to date, relevant and provided in context. The latter point means that you can see how things are implemented in the real world – you learn skills that you can actually use, and it feels like there's a real focus on the application of knowledge.

In what way does SANS training empower practitioners to enhance their technical proficiency and effectively address complex cybersecurity challenges?

SANS courses can be quite intense. Even when you take a course that is pitched at the right level for you, it will cover a broad range of topics without sacrificing any depth of knowledge. Equally, the focus on putting things into a practical context requires you to understand how what you're learning is and/or can be applied in the real world. There's also the SANS CTF competitions – these can be a great way to use what you've learned to address complex cybersecurity challenges.

How does SANS Institute's training curriculum address the latest industry trends, technologies, and best practices to ensure practitioners like yourself are equipped with knowledge and skills?

The current course offerings are kept up to date to ensure that they remain relevant. For example, there was a clear focus on cloud technologies when I was studying the SEC401 course as this is an increasingly common area of cybersecurity to be dealing with. However, what I've found since finishing the course is that the balance of content (e.g. cloud vs non-cloud, Linux vs Windows vs MacOS, etc.) quite accurately reflects the balance of things I've encountered in my career so far.

New courses are also being created that address different industry areas of focus, so you can be quite confident that what you're learning is going to be relevant to what you'll see in your career.

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Aside from the training offerings available at SANS, do you use any of the complimentary resources or attend the complimentary summits? If yes, please share why and how it supports you and your role.

Yes. There are regular webcasts that cover interesting topics and the summits are host to some interesting talks and presentations. They are often a good way to explore areas of interest or learn something practical. One webcast that I recently enjoyed involved the application of Python to various security contexts.