

7 steps you can take now to test and better secure your cloud environments, services & data

I see cloud security as a sort of Swiss army knife – it has a plethora of capabilities, and, used correctly, it can give you greater visibility over your environment and the flexibility to build up your security maturity in a way that is bespoke to your business. However, it is a powerful tool and needs to be treated with respect. Without the correct expertise and underlying work it is very easy for things to go wrong. **James Lyne // Secure Impact**

1 Cover the basics around IAM.

Due to the complexity and specific nature of the cloud, it's critical to get the basics right.

Review your password policies, how you store and manage credentials, methods of authentication and use of MFA, ensure roles and permissions follow the principle of least privilege and that use of highly privileged roles is carefully managed. These are simple steps you can take today to secure any cloud service or environment.

2 Be flexible in your approach to adopting cloud services.

Be realistic about your company risk profile. Are you risk averse or high-risk organisation?

Be honest about where you are on your journey and maturity and find a model that works for you when operating the cloud.

3 Recruit the specialists you need and continue upskilling.

Security teams often feel they can use general cyber security specialists to secure their clouds, only are now discovering it is wildly different – requiring specific skills, tools, and knowledge.

Cloud security has specific controls and best practices, and ensuring that you have a team with the right skills and experience will put you in the best position to succeed.

Training should be ongoing due to the rapid changing nature of the cloud.

4 Validate and test the cloud consistently.

Cloud security testing is not the same as standard testing, and often doesn't get as much attention.

As with pentesting, there is no one size fits it, but you should have a robust testing strategy in place with testers that know your tech stack and the cloud services in use.

PANEL



James Lyne
Founder of
Secure Impact



Simon Vernon
Head of Research
at SANS



Tom Fawcus Gibbs
VP of Technology at
Secure Impact



Giorgia Cacace
General Manager at
Secure Impact





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Following the principles of DevOps and DevSecOps, leverage automation and standardisation.

- Consider building out templates and automating basic or common cloud security processes. Investment in automation allows those valuable cloud security specialists to apply their skills to ongoing change and the cloud-specific nuance that is so often the cause of an incident.
- Deploying infrastructure as code gives you a lot of options, it supports the streamlining of your processes, shortening the time it takes to deploy remediations and providing numerous opportunities to interrogate and test changes before they have an opportunity to introduce active vulnerabilities.
- Taken as a whole, this can be a significant undertaking, but applying these concepts even to just a portion of your environment can have a huge impact on your overall security and resilience.

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Give threat modelling a go!

- Encourage your wider engineering teams to revisit their approach to threat modelling and how it fits into their work.
- There are different ways to approach it, each requires you to have good visibility about what you plan to model against (application, network, infrastructure), in order to apply these techniques. Find something small to start with and see how much can be learned.

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Ask for help from an external sounding board.

- There are a lot of ways to get things right with the cloud and many other ways to get it wrong.
- If you are unsure about the next step to take, it's always useful to find specialist help and work with veterans who have seen these things many times before.

Whether you are just starting out on your cloud transformation journey, or would value an expert sounding board to review or test your current cloud security strategy, please get in touch at hello@secure-impact.com