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*What it takes
to become an*
**information
assurance
analyst**

What it takes to become an information assurance analyst

This in-demand role calls for a rare combination of superior communication skills and security chops. Learn how one information assurance analyst landed his current job, the skills and training that helped him get there, and where his sights are set now.

BY STACY COLLETT



AFTER SPENDING 13 years working in systems administration and network and desktop support, Simeon Holloway had reached a crossroads in his career.

“I had capped out on the knowledge” required for the positions, Holloway says. “Salary-wise, I was capping out, too. I wanted to move in a different

direction — something challenging and that was in high demand.” Cybersecurity was at the top of his list. In 2014, he set out on a self-guided journey toward a new career. Today, Holloway is an information assurance analyst for the Georgia Lottery in Atlanta.

Getting serious about security

While still a senior systems administrator for the Centers for Disease Control, Holloway kicked into overdrive, spending his evenings and weekends researching cybersecurity online. “I watched YouTube videos, joined webinars, things like that,” Holloway says. He spent four months studying for and earning his CompTIA Security+ certification, and attended a five-day Certified Ethical Hacker Bootcamp course that helped him get his CEH certification six months later. “I also built my own virtual lab — taking some of the free cyber tools available online, like BackTrack and Kali Linux, and practiced pen testing,” he adds.

His job search took about year. “I

had a lot of interviews and interest; I just didn’t have the experience,” Holloway recalls. In September 2015, the Georgia Lottery took a chance on Holloway and made him its information assurance/cybersecurity analyst. “I had the foundation to fit right in,” he says. “It was more of just learning the organization and the products.”

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– KORY PATRICK

CAREER PROFILE

Information assurance analyst

Roles/responsibilities	Information assurance analysts conduct ongoing vulnerability management activities to assess potential treats; coordinate and lead technology staff in identifying and remediating system vulnerabilities; work with IT to ensure appropriate procedures and processes are in place for detecting and preventing system intrusions; and monitor, measure, test and report on information security controls, as well as compliance.
Minimum education	BS or BA degree in computer science or related technical field preferred, or a corresponding number of years of experience in IT.
Relevant areas of study	Computer science or related technical field
Skills/certifications	One or more of the following security certifications: CEH, Security+, SSCP, SANS GIAC, or GCIH. And/or one of the following technical certifications: MCP or CCNA.
Potential employers	DISH Network, Vencore, General Dynamics IT, Lockheed Martin, Leidos (Source: Indeed.com)
Salary	\$65K to \$130K

SOURCE: JANCO ASSOCIATES

Victor Janulaitis, CEO of management consulting firm Janco Associates Inc. says that demand for information assurance analysts is fairly high right now “because C-level executives are concerned about the quality of the information that’s being transmitted and the extent of how much information is being made public.” The information assurance analyst is a bridge between other security staff and users, says Janulaitis.

On the job

In general, an information assurance analyst conducts ongoing vulnerability management activities to assess potential treats, coordinates and leads technology staff in identifying and remediating system vulnerabilities, and works with IT to ensure appropriate procedures and processes are in place for detecting and preventing system intrusions, according to the Janco job description report.

The position also requires above-average communication and critical-

thinking skills, says Kory Patrick, head of the information security practice at TEKsystems Global Services LLC. “They have to understand the why behind what they’re doing,” he says. “You may also have to wake up someone at 3 a.m. or deliver bad news to management, so those critical thinking and communication skills become especially important.”

The career ladder for the information assurance analyst would probably include a move up to a senior information assurance analyst and then to a



project manager or a systems and programming position, Janulaitis says.

Holloway’s next goal is to move into engineering or design, he says, adding

that “obtaining a few more certifications would help.”

In the meantime, Holloway continues with his self-guided cybersecurity education. “I continue to do what got me here — [going to] conferences, a lunch-and-learn, networking with other peers, reading online articles, anything related to cyber.” And he earned a GIAC Security Essentials certification from the SANS Institute earlier this year. “It’s still a learning experience,” he says. “In cybersecurity, you don’t know everything.” ■