

Hackers in the House

Tips for Successful Engagement

Reminder: what are we trying to achieve?

We are bringing together the cybersecurity and cyber policy communities to listen to and learn from each other.

While there are specific tips for both sides outlined below, the most important things to remember for everyone are:

- 1.** There's jargon everywhere. We all speak our own language in some shape or way. Let's find a common language to speak to each other.
- 2.** Different perspectives are valuable. We'll come at things from different angles - that's what we want as it's how we'll get to better outcomes in the end. Let's remember that compromise is also an art.
- 3.** All contributions matter, and so does respect. Treating each other with basic respect and a willingness to listen – even when we disagree – is how we build trust, credibility, and further engagement.

The Role of Captains

Throughout the day, discussions between the security and policy communities will be guided by captains. Most of them have half a foot in both camps - i.e. are used to working with the security community and technical experts, and have a background or understanding of the world of policy. They're there to act as facilitators, translators, navigators and, where required, chaperones.

Ask them any questions, and, without forgetting the ground rules above, rely on them to keep things moving smoothly, and ensure everyone has an enjoyable experience.

Tips for Security Participants

Before the briefing:

- Research the department you are meeting with to understand their priorities and responsibilities.
- Familiarise yourself with anything they have published on the topic of your briefing.

During the briefing:

- There is no particular dress code - dress how you are comfortable and feel authentic, but remember that you want to be taken seriously. So you don't need to be in a suit and tie, but you also probably want to avoid the jeans held together with safety pins and bad intentions.
- Assume good intent. They are likely not experts in cybersecurity, but they want to learn from your expertise. Recognise that they are experts at what they do, not what YOU do.
- Avoid jargon – make it easy for them to understand what you're talking about. Keep it simple.
- If you are using technical terms, please explain them; don't assume knowledge.
- Be courteous and helpful – you want them to want to work with you! Also, please bear in mind that folks in the room may be neurodiverse and used to different modes of interaction. Be patient and understanding.
- Be honest about the challenges.
- Provide actionable feedback and recommendations.
- Understand that policymakers may not go as far or as fast as you would if you were Ultimate Ruler, but progress is often incremental and that's OK. It may be worth thinking about how you would organise your recommendations into urgent, critical, nice to have.
- Don't record the meeting or share things discussed unless you have express permission to do so.
- Don't hog all the time; let your fellow attendees speak!
- Bear in mind that some things may be shared that are not yet public or have not yet been decided.

After the briefing:

- If you promised to follow up on something, do so.
- Consider whether you want to stay engaged in the process as it progresses.

Tips for Government Participants

Before the briefing:

- Be clear on what you want to cover and achieve from the meeting and communicate that to the organisers in a timely fashion so they assign relevant attendees.

During the briefing:

- Establish clear parameters or expectations for the meeting at the start.
- Assume good intent. If people are participating they likely want to help, no matter how cynical or jaded they may sound. Also, please bear in mind that some participants may be neurodiverse and used to different modes of interaction. Be patient and understanding.
- Avoid jargon – make it easy for them to understand what you're talking about. If you are using policy terms or referencing policy processes, please explain them; don't assume knowledge.
- If you find the discussion rabbit-holing or going off topic, don't hesitate to steer it back on track.
- Don't feel embarrassed asking questions. Security nerds love to have a chance to nerd out, so ask away!
- We will be telling people to treat the meetings as confidential, however, we recognise that enthusiasm can lead to looser lips, so please be judicious about what you share.
- Snarky shirts, hoodies and crazy hairdos are normal in our community - don't judge us for it!

After the briefing:

- Please follow up if there are topics or points you want to explore more.
- Please do reach out to individuals you want to keep involved in the process (either directly or through the group Captain).