

True Stories from the Inside

Turning people around, not turning them in!

Everyone needs help sometimes!

Based on a true story!



A contractor working at a federal agency was having a tough time balancing life and work. “Bob” would engage in random conversations with coworkers he barely knew and would prattle on about his miseries. For instance, he would grumble about his divorce as if it had just happened despite the fact it had occurred over 15 years ago. People had always seen Bob as odd and awkward during general conversations

where he appeared distracted and made statements unrelated to the conversation at hand. Soon after, his work started to decline.

Indicators: Several issues brought Bob to the Insider Threat Program’s attention. First, Bob had been working long hours well outside of the normal workday. When asked, his supervisor assumed he was spending extra time on a work-related project, but she said she wasn’t really aware Bob had been working so late. Bob also had begun approaching some of his coworkers and asking about their work. Part of Bob’s job was to gather information for assessments, but his coworkers became concerned when his questions strayed into sensitive portions of their work, well outside the scope of the assessment. Bob’s supervisor had noticed the quality of his work had started to decline and he had fallen behind on several projects. The situation seemed to be reaching a critical point as all these incidents happened nearly simultaneously. Bob’s behavior had become troubling to several of his coworkers who reported their concerns to the Insider Threat Program.

Human Resources reviewed Bob’s security background checks and found he had at one time been arrested for assault and battery. Several years ago, Bob received counseling for depression and anxiety related to his divorce and was given medication to treat a mood disorder. Bob reported these matters himself. However, these issues, along with working long unauthorized hours, inappropriately seeking sensitive

information from others, his unusually poor work performance, his odd or bizarre behavior, and extreme stress related to his divorce are all reportable indicators. While indicators do not necessarily mean a coworker is headed down the wrong path, they may be a sign of someone who needs help. The inability to adequately deal with day to day stress can also leave a colleague vulnerable to adversaries looking to gain a foothold within an agency by exploiting an individual at a weak point in their life.

Results: The Insider Threat Program, through coordination with Bob’s Program Manager, was able to provide him with company resources for additional counseling and a performance improvement plan. Several months later, the company also provided Bob with some additional time off to take care of a sick family member. Since this intervention, Bob’s performance has improved and his dealings with others have become less awkward. Bob also appears to have a better balance in his life and work.

Everyone needs help sometimes. Insider Threat Programs can help turn around a bad situation. Remember, don’t try to explain away issues you encounter. If it’s out of the ordinary, report it.

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