GUIDE

Security Champions and Champions Networks

What a Security Champion does, who makes a good one, and how individual Champions become a network that changes behaviour. Free tools and a 28-day trial.

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What is a Security Champion?

One Champion is a role. A network is a capability.

A Security Champion is a member of the workforce, not the security team, who takes on a voluntary role helping the people around them work securely. They do it through trust and example, not enforcement. Champions are chosen for their influence with colleagues, not their technical knowledge, and the role takes twenty to thirty minutes a week.

A Security Champions Network is what happens when those people are connected, coordinated and supported as one programme. It is the difference between a few motivated people doing good work in isolation and an organisation that can see, measure and improve how its people behave around security. This page covers both.

Your most important security investment is already in the building.

The two-minute version.

New to the idea? Watch what a Security Champion is and does, why peer influence changes behaviour where training cannot, who makes a good one, and what turns a list of Champions into a network.

1:54

What is a Security Champion? The role, why it works, who to choose, and how Champions become a network.

What does a Security Champion do?

A Champion is the bridge between security professionals and the people doing the work. They do not enforce policy. They translate it into terms that make sense for their team, model good habits, and become the person colleagues turn to when something feels off.

That informal credibility is what makes them effective in ways a formal security function rarely can be. People change what they do because of the people around them, and a Champion is one of those people.

Each of those duties gets easier when a Champion is not working alone. That is what the rest of this page is about.

> **20–30 MIN / WEEK**
>
> **Designed around real working lives**
>
> The role should never become a second job. Twenty to thirty minutes a week, agreed with the Champion's manager, is enough when the tasks are focused and the support is there.

Translate security into team context

Champions put security requirements into the language and reality of their team, so they feel relevant rather than imposed.

Normalise incident reporting

By being open about near-misses and mistakes, Champions build the psychological safety that makes reporting the default.

Surface early risk signals

Because Champions sit inside the team, they hear things the security function never would. They are an early warning system built on trust.

Build lasting security habits

Through small, regular prompts and conversations, Champions help colleagues form secure habits that outlast any training event.

Connect the security team to reality

Champions feed back what their teams think, feel and struggle with, which is what the security team needs to design better interventions.

Why Champions work

Information passes on a single contact. Behaviour does not. Reporting a suspicious email or challenging a senior request costs effort and carries social risk, so most people wait until they have seen a few colleagues do it first.

A Champion is one of those colleagues, in the room, every week. That is something a training course cannot be. The evidence is in Simple and Complex Contagion.

Security spending has usually put technology first, with process and people following, and the human element is still the dominant factor in most incidents. We put people first, because people are the context in which technology and process either work or fail.

A security team cannot be in every meeting or every decision. With a Champion in engineering, finance, HR and operations, security thinking is present while the work is being done, and the security team hears what is happening on the ground, not what policy says should happen.

Who makes a good Champion

The person colleagues already go to with questions. Volunteers bring motivation and managers' nominees bring availability, but neither guarantees influence.

Look for trust within the team, the confidence to speak up, a manager who will protect the time, and curiosity about security. Technical depth is optional.

For how to find and ask those people, read Volunteer, voluntold or chosen. For the competencies the people running a programme need, see the Skills Framework.

> **Habits travel.** The secure behaviours people pick up at work go home with them, to family, to community groups, to suppliers and to their next employer. Every Champion you develop raises the security of the people around them as well as your own.

From Champion to network

One Champion changes a team. Connect them, give them a shared rhythm and measure what happens around them, and you have a Champions Network: a capability the organisation keeps when individuals move on.

What makes a network more than a list of Champions?

Most organisations that say they have a Champions programme actually have a list. A list of people who were nominated, volunteered or were told to attend a briefing. Some of them are active. Nobody is quite sure which ones. There is no structure connecting them, no shared cadence, and no way of knowing whether the whole thing is having any effect.

A network is different in kind, not just in size. It has coverage, so you know which teams have a Champion and which do not. It has connection, so Champions learn from each other rather than reinventing the same conversation in twenty places. It has coordination, so the security team can ask the network to do something and see it done. And it has feedback, so what Champions hear on the ground comes back to shape what happens next.

INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONS

Good people doing good work

- Effective within their own team, invisible beyond it
- Rely on personal motivation to keep going
- No way to compare or share what is working
- Activity is anecdotal; impact is a matter of belief
- When a Champion leaves, their work leaves with them

A CHAMPIONS NETWORK

An organisational capability

- Coverage across teams, sites and functions is known and managed
- Shared playbooks, cadence and support keep momentum going
- Champions are connected to each other and to the security team
- Activity, engagement and behaviour change are measured
- The network outlasts any individual member

Five things every working network has

Whether a network has fifteen Champions or five hundred, the same properties decide whether it works. They are not complicated. They are just easy to neglect when the network is being run from an inbox and a spreadsheet.

The first three are operational: knowing who you have, keeping them engaged, and being able to ask them to do things. The last two are about learning: hearing what comes back from the ground, and knowing whether any of it changed behaviour.

A network can be perfectly healthy on the first three alone, and many are. The last two are where a network stops being a communications channel and starts being a source of evidence.

Coverage

Every team, site and function that matters has a Champion, and you know where the gaps are. Coverage is the first thing a network manager should be able to see and the first thing that decays if nobody is watching.

Cadence

Champions meet, hear from the security team, and hear from each other on a rhythm that fits their working lives. Without cadence a network quietly becomes a list again.

Coordination

The security team can assign a task, run an event, or ask for a local intervention and see who has done it. Coordination is what turns goodwill into action at scale.

Feedback

What Champions hear from their colleagues comes back to the people designing controls and communications. The network is the best intelligence source most security teams never use.

Evidence

The network can show, not just claim, that behaviour has changed. This is the property that justifies the investment and the one that takes longest to build.

Shape matters more than size

Underneath all five properties sits the shape of the network: how Champions are connected, to each other and to the colleagues beside them. The shape that spreads an alert is not the shape that spreads a behaviour, and the same number of Champions placed differently can carry very different things.

Most programmes follow the same arc. In the first year the numbers look good: Champions recruited, coverage reached, awareness up, a lively community. In the second year awareness holds, behaviour stays flat, and more of the same effort does not move it. We call that the wall. It is crossed by a change of structure, not by more effort: Champions in pairs or threes embedded inside the teams whose behaviour needs to change, chosen for their position in the team rather than their enthusiasm, with the programme counting what reaches colleagues rather than what reaches Champions.

DECISION 1

Recruit in pairs, not singles

One Champion in each of sixty teams spreads awareness and nothing else. Two in each of thirty teams, who know each other, is where behaviour can start. Fewer teams covered, more teams that can tip.

DECISION 2

Choose by position, not enthusiasm

Ask each team who they go to for advice and who they would tell about a suspicious message, and recruit those people.

DECISION 3

Count what reaches colleagues

Decide now that you will measure the behaviour colleagues observe in their own team, not only Champions recruited and sessions held.

The Security Champions Maturity Model sets out the five stages and the gates for each. The network models show the five shapes a network can take and what each one can carry, and The Champion Density Problem covers how many Champions a team needs.

Start from where you are.

Each of these is free, and none of them asks for an email address.

BUILDING A NETWORK FROM NOTHING

Getting started

Learn the ideas, plan the programme with the Champions Journey Planner, and build the business case that gets it sponsored.

cybehave.com/getting-started

ALREADY RUNNING ONE

Running your network

Take the Champions Programme Health Check, find the challenge that sounds like yours, or bring a stalled network back.

cybehave.com/running-your-network

DESIGNING IT PROPERLY

The Network Blueprint

The eight components every network is made of, the decisions inside each one, and what good looks like at your stage.

cybehave.com/champions-network-blueprint

WANTING THE WHOLE STORY

The Rise of the Security Champion

The free ebook. Nine chapters on designing, launching, measuring and sustaining a network.

cybehave.com/the-rise-of-the-security-champion

Past the awareness plateau? Beyond awareness brings together Secure Behaviour Management 101, the SHIELD Framework and the research behind them.

Measuring a Champions programme

> Reporting on a network's size is easy, which is why so many programmes report attendance, engagement and the number of Champions recruited. Those numbers describe the programme you built. They keep looking good at the plateau, because they do not fall when the behaviour line stays flat.
>
> The question a sponsor eventually asks is different: has anything changed in how people behave? Answering it needs measures taken from different people, so that nobody marks their own homework. Colleagues report the behaviour they observe in their own team. Champions and a short network survey show how the network is connected. Programme leads give the programme's own view, kept separate from the other two.
>
> Read more in how to measure a Security Champions programme.

A platform built around those five things.

HEROES by CyBehave is the Security Champions platform. It is not a generic LMS or HR platform repurposed for security. It is built on the COM-B model and the Behaviour Change Wheel for the specific job of running a Champions network, and the core platform covers all five properties of a working network from day one, in plain language and without anyone needing to be a behavioural scientist.

Coverage

A coverage map by team, site and function, the Champion influence map that shows how security actually spreads, and how your teams split between carrying behaviour change, awareness only, or no Champion yet.

CORE PLATFORM

Cadence

An engagement calendar, events with attendance, recognition and Champion of the Month, so the rhythm keeps going without a reminder email every week.

CORE PLATFORM

Coordination

Champion management, tasks with completion tracking, and a status view of who is active, who is drifting and where the gaps are.

CORE PLATFORM

Feedback

Champion check-ins and the quarterly Team Pulse, so what colleagues observe reaches the people designing controls and communications.

CORE PLATFORM

Evidence

All three measures from day one: Programme Capability and Network Capability, the leading measures, and the Behaviour Index, observed by colleagues, the outcome they are expected to move. Each comes from a different group of people.

CORE PLATFORM

As a programme matures, add-on modules go deeper on evidence, network analysis, behavioural method and risk. They add depth, not measures: the number on each measure is the same with or without them, and each can be bought on its own. You add them when you need them, so you are never paying for capability you cannot yet use.

Questions about Security Champions

What is a Security Champion?

A member of the workforce, outside the security team, who takes on a voluntary role helping the people around them work securely, through trust and example.

Is a Security Champion part of the security team?

No. Champions stay in their own roles and teams. That is the point: they are present where the work happens, and colleagues listen to them as peers.

How much time does the role take?

Twenty to thirty minutes a week is enough for a well-run programme. Agree the time with each Champion's manager before they start.

How many Security Champions do you need?

Start with a small first cohort and grow from what you learn. The right number for each team depends on its size and how connected it is. The Champion Density Problem covers the evidence.

How do you choose Security Champions?

For influence first. Ask who colleagues go to for advice, then ask those people personally and give them a real choice. Volunteer, voluntold or chosen sets out the approach.

What is the difference between a Security Champion and a Champions Network?

A Champion is a role held by one person. A Champions Network is those people connected, coordinated and measured as one programme.

Do Security Champions need a technical background?

No. Trust and communication matter more. Champions are chosen for their standing with colleagues, and the security team supplies the technical knowledge.

What makes a Champions network work?

Five things: coverage, cadence, coordination, feedback and evidence. The first three keep it running. The last two are what let it show that behaviour has changed.

How do you measure a Security Champions programme?

By what reaches colleagues, not only by what the programme does. Measure the behaviour colleagues observe in their own team, how the network is connected, and the programme's own view, each from a different group of people. How to measure a Security Champions programme sets it out.

How long before a programme changes behaviour?

Awareness usually rises in the first year. Behaviour tends to stay flat until the network is reshaped, with Champions in pairs or threes inside target teams. The Security Champions Maturity Model explains why, and what the change involves.

Sources and further reading

- CyBehave, Simple and Complex Contagion.
- CyBehave, The Champion Density Problem.
- CyBehave, Volunteer, voluntold or chosen: how to recruit champions who change behaviour.
- CyBehave, The Security Champions Maturity Model.
- Wood, A. (2026). A Security Champion maturity model: Carrying capacity, the awareness plateau and the wall between simple and complex contagion. Working paper.

- Forrester, Four Things You Should Know About Security Champions Networks.
- CyBehave, The Rise of the Security Champion, free ebook.

Glossary

The terms from network and behavioural science used in this document, in plain English.

Champion embedding. The share of a champion's security-related conversations that happen inside their own team rather than with other champions or the security team. Low embedding is the signature of a champion cluster.

Tipped team. A team in which most people now do the behaviour, so the team itself keeps it going and shows it to newcomers and to neighbouring teams.

About this document

This document was built on 23 November 2026 from the page at cybehave.com/champions, so it carries the guidance as it was published that day. The page is kept up to date; download a fresh copy whenever you need one.

This page **cybehave.com/champions**

Free Champions Programme Health Check **cybehave.com/champions-health-check/**

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