Training Case Study

Lee Cramp provides a delegate perspective on attending various URM certificate training courses in 2016

Before joining Manchester Fire & Rescue Service as Head of Information Security in February 2016, I had worked in local government for 15 years in a range of governance, compliance and enforcement roles, at both operational and strategic levels. With a background in Law, I was comfortable dealing with the regulatory and legislative compliance side of information security; however, I felt I needed to attend a range of training courses that would fill the gaps in my knowledge and experience. My initial requirement was for a course which covered the full breadth of information security from a professional perspective.

I was looking for a course that was part of a portfolio so that I could then build on the platform course with further specialist courses. I was also looking for a portfolio with the same training provider where there would be more likelihood of consistency in terminology and continuity in approach. Having researched the options, I felt that the Certificate in Information Security Management Principles or CISMP course from BCS offered the ideal platform covering all aspects of information security from technology to people, policy, process and risk components.

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5 Day BCS Certificate in Information Security Management Principles (CISMP)

Having selected the BCS CISMP, I then had to decide which training provider to go with and I selected URM for a number of reasons. I liked what I read in the course prospectus which laid out the course syllabus in plain English and the fact that their course had also been accredited as part of the GCHQ Certified Training (GCT) scheme.

Through the CISMP course, I was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts and principles that underpin information security as well as an appreciation of the importance of aspects such as risk management. I enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere on the course where we were all encouraged to participate and raise any questions, even those 'silly' ones you are worried to ask.

It was great not only to gain clear guidance and definitions on the different terminology, but to get real world applications and scenarios from the trainer. I think the course really benefitted from the mixed background of other attendees, where different approaches and ideas were shared. Gaining an industry acknowledged certificate for passing the end of course exam was good, but the greatest benefit for me was gaining the confidence to return to the Service and start engaging with the Board and promoting a best practice approach.

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3 Day GCT ISO 27001 Implementation Course

Like the CISMP, I was attracted to this certificate course as it was accredited as part of the GCT Scheme. Whilst ISO 27001 was covered within CISMP, I was looking for a course that would go into greater detail on what was involved in both implementing an ISO 27001 compliant information security management system (ISMS) and what extra is required to achieve certification. As this was the first course of its kind to be run, there was quite a bit of debate over some of the mock and the live multi-choice exam questions. However, the real value of the course for me was the practical insights I gained from the trainer with her considerable experience of implementing ISO 27001.

She not only provided lots of practical examples of how to meet the requirements of Standard across all lifecycle phases including the plan phase and risk assessment activities, but also covered the extra demands of achieving certification. The insights I gained from this course greatly helped in formulating the Service's information security management strategy and our decision to comply and not certify to the Standard.

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5 Day Practitioner Certificate in Information Risk Management Course (PCIRM)

Both the CISMP and ISO 27001 courses stressed the importance of risk management, so this course was the logical next step for me. There were lots of practical exercises in PCIRM and the course again benefitted from the real world experiences of the trainer which helped instil best practice. Whilst the CISMP was a multi-choice exam, the PCIRM involved some short answer and essay style questions. The mock exams were good in preparing for the end of course BCS exam, although I felt that one or two questions could be worded more clearly.

However, the big plus of PCIRM is the skills you pick up in conducting risk assessments and the ability to put forward reasoned arguments for implementing different security measures, as well as walking decision makers/asset owners through the risk management and decision making process.

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Overall View of Courses

Having sat courses with other training providers, what differentiates URM is the fact their trainers are all practising consultants. This means that you not only get practical insights and anecdotes, but information is spot up to date. The fact all training courses are classroom based is great for me as I like the opportunity to ask questions and be able to get immediate feedback from someone who is a practitioner rather than an academic.

The residential nature of the courses is ideal for being able to share experience and ideas with the trainer and other delegates outside of the normal training day. I sat the courses at different venues and all provided good distraction-free learning environments and I have to say that the pre and post course support I received from URM has always been faultless. Overall, I have really enjoyed all the courses I have taken and would recommend them to others.

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