

# HUMOROUS AND CAPTIVATING: OUR AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Awareness campaigns can be educational, entertaining and motivating. BLS shows how this works: in an extensive awareness campaign, they sensitized 3,500 employees to various aspects of information security within four weeks. The varied campaign, consisting of social engineering, live hacking and humorous and informative documents, motivated the employees throughout the entire campaign.



“If you sweat because of me in the next few days...”, a life-size cardboard figure of James greeted the BLS staff on the first day of the awareness campaign and gave them a Capri juice on the way. BLS is one of the largest transport companies in Switzerland: the second-largest S-Bahn network in Switzerland, 420 kilometers of rail, bus, ship, car transport and freight traffic. To ensure that everything runs smoothly every day, BLS relies on functioning IT systems and on its employees reacting promptly and correctly to various incidents. The charming security coach James accompanied the BLS employees through the awareness campaign and humorously showed them how to keep cool heads.

## **BLS-specific security topics**

During the following four weeks, the BLS staff were accompanied by James and sensitised to various aspects of

information security. A central topic was social engineering - interpersonal influence, e.g. unauthorized physical access or phishing e-mails. In addition, the safe handling of e-mails and behaviour at the workplace were discussed, as well as data protection, including the use and storage of passwords, and cloud security.

“We have coordinated the topics with BLS - that is the advantage of an individualised awareness campaign. We can cover exactly those topics that are relevant for the organisation. We can also address the corporate culture,” explains Liene Millere of Redguard. The mascot “James” was a perfect fit for BLS’s collegial corporate culture.

## **The human is the goal**

The target of today’s cyber-attacks is usually humans. A lack of attention or simply a lack of knowledge turns employees into weak points and simple gates of entry into an organization. Phishing e-mails in particular are frequently used by attackers to access sensitive information. To show how tricky and professional phishing e-mails can look these days, BLS carried out a phishing campaign right at the start in which employees received a seemingly harmless e-mail with a link. If the employees clicked on the link, they were informed about the phishing attack by James. In a positive and motivating way, James gave tips on how to detect a phishing email and what emergency action to take when the link was clicked.



The anonymous evaluations served as an assessment of the sensitization, as a comparison for further phishing e-mails and as a verification of the effectiveness in the course of the awareness campaign.

### Four weeks with varied activities

The phishing emails were only a small part of the whole awareness campaign. In Live Hackings Redguard Security Tester demonstrated on site how easy attacks can be realized. For example, they showed how quickly a password can be cracked or how easily a seemingly trustworthy Wi-Fi can be set up. Various documents were also prepared in order to raise employee awareness. James, the charming, cheeky boy, was always there. He used posters, flyers, online quizzes, information letters or short messages via e-mail to draw attention to various aspects of information security in a humorous way and gave recommendations and tips.

### Employee motivation as a success factor

The attention and motivation of the employees is a decisive success factor of an awareness campaign. Employees often feel controlled and observed, are stressed out by everyday business or do not see the purpose of the awareness campaign. The awareness campaign at BLS has shown how important it is to continuously motivate employees and activate them in their working environment. The varied instruments and James as Security Coach were very well received by the employees. The employees were very committed. This is also reflected in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the awareness campaign.



**„The entire campaign with fictional security leader James was a great success“**

**Urs Fuchser**, IT architect for Security  
BLS AG



### Cooperation with Redguard

“The entire campaign with the fictitious security leader James was a great success,” says Urs Fuchser, IT architect for security at BLS AG. The management was enthusiastic about the idea of using little James to learn security topics in an entertaining way. One of the greatest successes for BLS was the sharp increase in the sensitivity of attacks via phishing e-mails. Measurements have also shown that a similar campaign in previous years is still having an effect, and the employees could be picked up repeatedly thanks to the renewed targeted sensitisation. Social engineering by a stranger also achieved a gratifying result. As it turned out, BLS employees developed courage and increased sensitivity towards other employees and outsiders. Urs Fuchser praised the campaign and the thread drawn through it by the leading figure “James”, who helped employees keep the content in mind. The central content of such an extensive awareness campaign is good planning with clear goals and content, says Urs Fuchser. A positive anchoring according to the principle “I trust you to do a lot and help you to become even better” supports the common thread and helps a positive rethinking of all participants. Following the principle: “Less is more”, BLS decided to limit itself to a few weekly goals and to link these closely to the available tools in everyday working life, thus sustainably increasing awareness for security.