

New Cyber Czar is Part Promoter, Part Peacekeeper

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With little more than a week in his new role as federal cybersecurity coordinator under his belt, Howard Schmidt made his first industry appearance yesterday at the annual State of the Net conference in Washington, DC. In contrast to the many opinions reported in the media that the position, as structured, has insufficient authority to be effective, Schmidt asserts that he has the President's ear and his support. The impression he gave was someone who has broad practical expertise combined with the diplomatic skills necessary to build consensus among diverse constituencies across the federal bureaucracy and beyond. It is likely he will need both skill sets to succeed at the challenge ahead.

As special assistant to the president and senior director for cybersecurity Schmidt reports directly to the head of the National Security Council and is also a member of the National Economic Council, reflecting the Administration's connection between cybersecurity and economic security. He has a staff of ten supporting his efforts.

In the speech Schmidt covered little new ground, but rather reemphasized several of the key priorities that were laid out when [his appointment was announced](#) in December, including:

- Updating a comprehensive security strategy to protect federal networks
- Developing an organized, unified response to future cyber attacks
- Strengthening public-private partnerships and international cooperation
- Grow R&D investments in the next generation of cybersecurity technologies
- Launch a national campaign to promote cyber awareness and education

Schmidt laid out one objective as effective risk management rather than the impossible task of risk elimination. He is also looking to bring security improvements to several areas, including supply chain management, cloud computing and identity management.

Regarding the move of IT services to the cloud, Schmidt said the key is to do it right from the onset by establishing specific agreements between the parties involved, including what services move to the cloud and where and what level of authentication is needed to ensure security.