

# Learning From Safety-critical Industries

**Control Failure Is Normal, Deal With It.**

An abstract graphic in the background consisting of a grid of light blue lines forming a mesh. Some nodes in the grid are highlighted with small orange circles, and the grid appears to curve and recede into the distance.

# John Elliott

Consultant



# Were You at the Community Meeting When?



John Nance  
2015



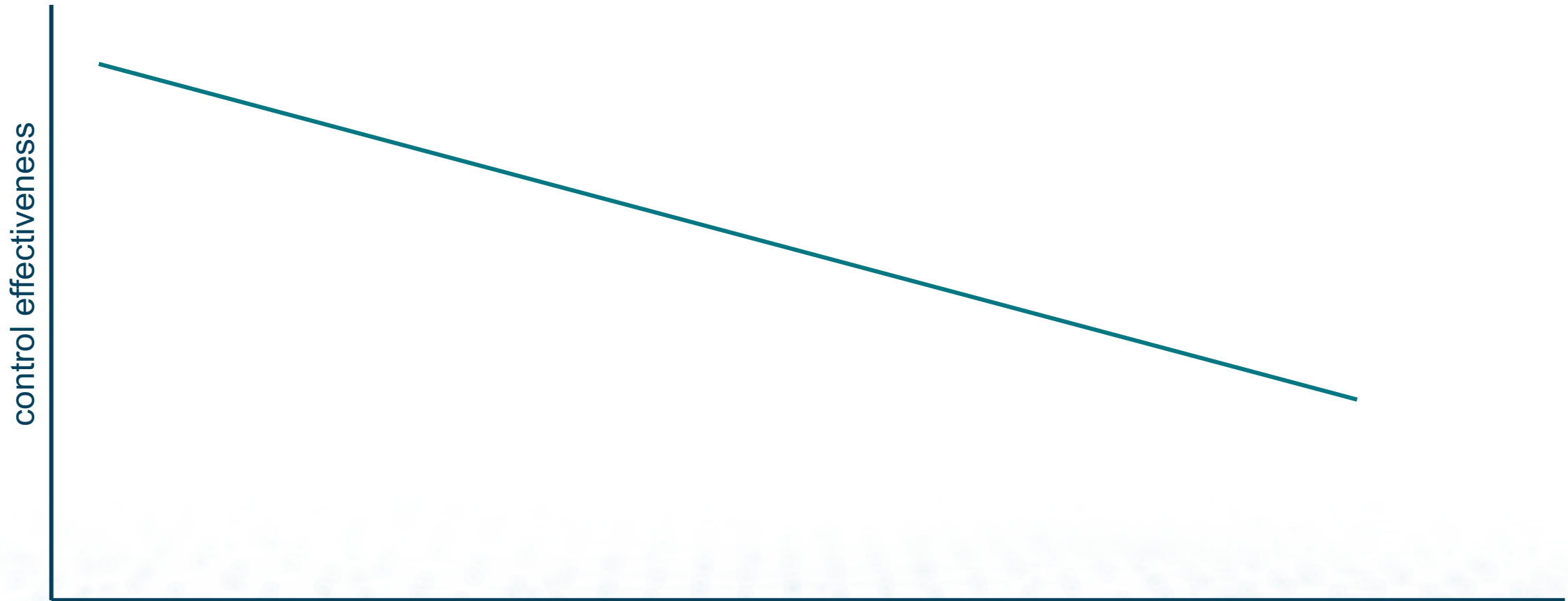
Jeff Skiles  
2017 & 2018

# My Own Aviation Experience



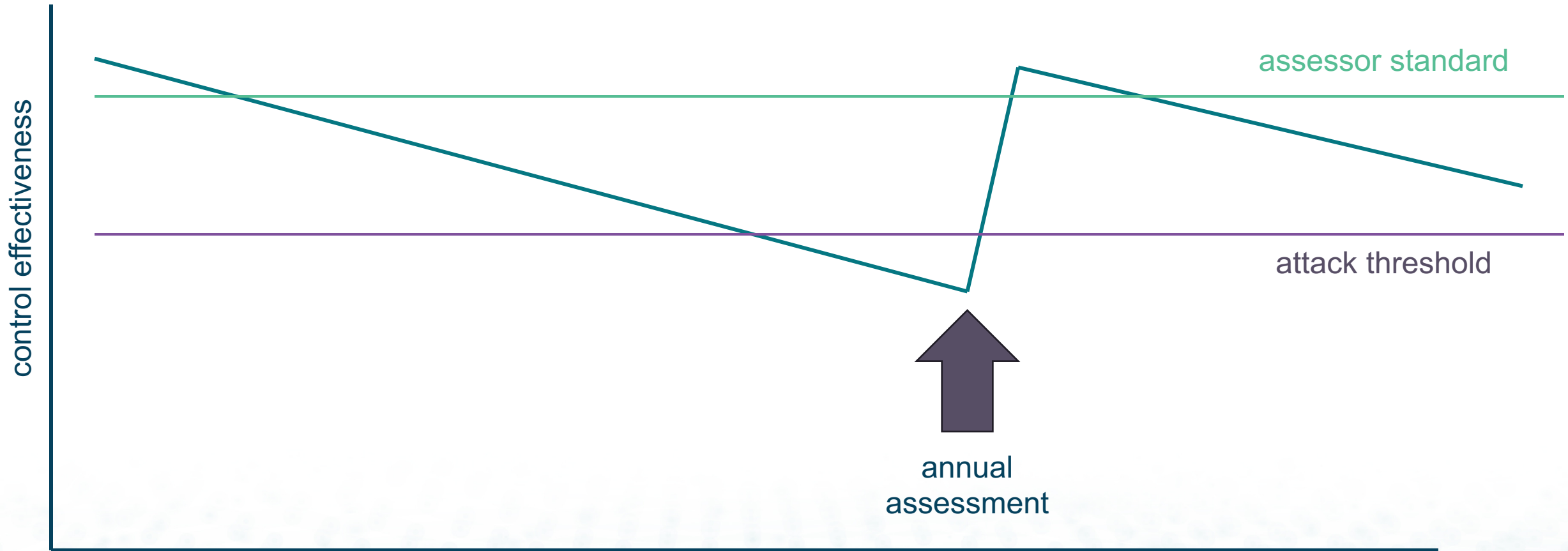
# Why PCI DSS Has Annual Assessments

(This is what I used to say)



# Why PCI DSS Has Annual Assessments

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# Vertical Disintegration

4. Laundering the money

3. Actually making money

2. Working out how to make money from that access

1. Breaking into an organization's system

# Vertical Disintegration

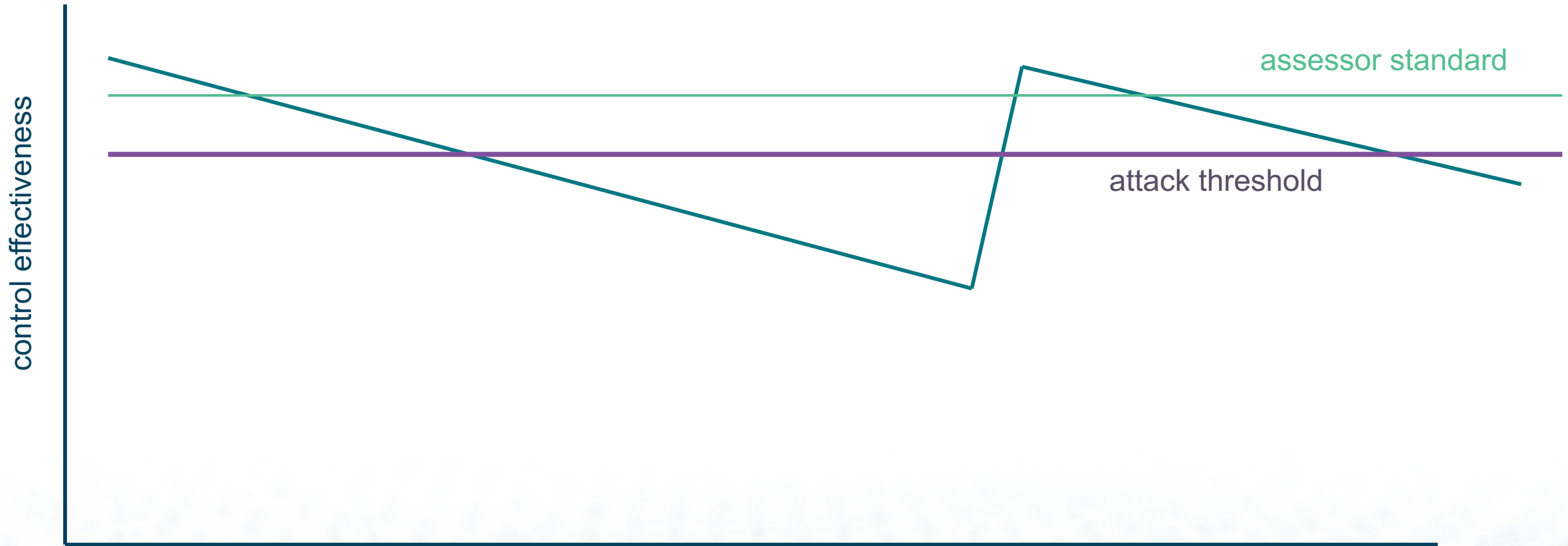
4. Laundering the money

3. Actually making money

2. Working out how to make money from that access

1. Breaking into an organization's system

# Why PCI DSS Has Annual Assessments



**“The firewall was  
incorrectly configured.”**

Forensic Investigator

**“The server that was  
attacked was not  
patched.”**

Forensic Investigator

**“We took advantage of a  
misconfiguration.”**

Penetration Tester

**“Not all systems were  
running the application  
sandbox.”**

Penetration Tester

**“We knew that one  
server wasn’t patched.”**

Internal Information Security

**“That was scheduled to be fixed next week.”**

Internal Information Security

# “Dave was just looking at that ...”

Dave's manager

# Why Do Controls Fail?

## Natural Entropy

- Never fully implemented
- Sometimes software does not do what you expect
- Misconfiguration
- Not updated
- Removed “temporarily” because something stopped working
- The person who understood them left

# Why Are Controls Totally Missing?

## Change

- Never fully implemented across all devices
- Removed by users
- New systems added to scope
- Removed “temporarily” because something stopped working
- Didn’t re-license

**Aviation doesn't  
“do safety”**

**Aviation is safe**

## Key Concept

# Humans are fallible

# Key Principles in Safety-Critical Industries

Engineer  
fallibility out

Compensate  
for fallibility

Reduce  
fallibility

Learn from  
errors and  
incidents



Engineer  
fallibility out

How can we make it so that a human error  
doesn't affect anything?

- Electronic toolboxes
- Stall control



Engineer  
fallibility out

How can we make it so that a human error doesn't affect anything?

- Software auto-update
  - Multi-factor authentication
  - Software signing
  - Anti-malware
- (we used to say don't click on files)



Compensate  
for fallibility



# How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

1. In business-as-usual operations
2. In rare events
3. Continual assurance checks to catch issues before they have an effect



Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

## 1. In business-as-usual operations

- Checklists
- Doors to automatic and **cross-check**
- Steering bypass pin removed

# After Push Back





Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

## 1. In business-as-usual operations

- Checklists
- Dual-control



Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

## 2. In rare events

- Checklists
- Rehearsed plans





Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

## 2. In rare events

- Incident response plan
- Rehearsed / tested



Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

3. Continual assurance checks to catch issues before they have an effect

- Prioritized checks



Compensate  
for fallibility



How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

3. Continual assurance checks to catch issues before they have an effect

- Prioritized control tests



Compensate  
for fallibility

● ● ●

Requirement	Detail
1.2.7	<b>Six monthly</b> review of NSC configurations
3.2.1	<b>Quarterly</b> verification that there is no cardholder data present beyond specified retention period
7.2.4	<b>Six monthly</b> review of all user accounts and related access*
7.2.5.1	<b>Periodic</b> (based on TRA) review of access of system and application accounts *
9.4.1.2	Annual validation of security of offline media backup
9.4.5.1	Annual validation of inventory of physical media containing cardholder data.
11.2.1	<b>Quarterly</b> scanning for rogue wireless access points. (Optional, other non-scan technology may be used to meet the requirement)
11.3.1	<b>Quarterly</b> internal vulnerability scans
11.3.2	<b>Quarterly</b> external vulnerability (ASV) scans
11.4.2	Annual internal penetration test
11.4.4	
11.4.3	Annual external penetration test
11.4.4	
11.4.5	<b>Six monthly</b> CDE segmentation penetration test
12.2.2	Annual review of information security policy
12.3.1	Annual review of all TRAs every 12 months
12.3.3	Annual review of cryptographic inventory *
12.3.4	Annual review of hardware and software technologies
12.4.2	<b>Quarterly</b> assurance reviews of requirement 10.4 – daily log reviews
12.4.2	<b>Quarterly</b> assurance reviews of requirement 1.2.7 – config reviews of NSCs
12.4.2	<b>Quarterly</b> assurance reviews of requirement 2.2.1 – applying config standards to new systems
12.4.2	<b>Quarterly</b> assurance reviews of requirement
12.4.2	<b>Quarterly</b> assurance reviews of requirement 6.5.1 – Change management procedures
12.5.2	Annual (Six-monthly*) documentation and confirmation of scope
12.6.2	Annual review of security awareness program
12.8.4	Annual review of TPSPs compliance status
12.10.2	Annual test of incident response plan
12.10.2	Annual review of incident response plan

## 1.2.2 | Change management of NSCs

Days since last assurance check	Non-conformances found	Non-conformances still outstanding	Days to next assurance check
100	5	3	-10 Overdue

## 1.2.3 | Validity of network diagram

Days since last assurance check	Non-conformances found	Non-conformances still outstanding	Days to next assurance check
100	1	0	80

No	Detail	Frequency (months)
2.2.1	Update of configuration standards and use of config standards for new builds	3
3.2.1	No cardholder data present beyond specified retention period	3
3.7	Where key custodians are used, all key custodians are still working for the entity and can produce their physical or digital key material (suggest every 4 or 6 months)	3
4.2.1.1	Validation of inventory of keys and certificates*	6
5.2.3	Review of systems where anti-malware solutions are not deployed based on period defined by TRA	6
5.3	Coverage of updated, functioning, anti-malware solution over the intended estate	2
5.4.1	Operation of automated anti-phishing mechanisms*	6
6.2.2	Annual secure software development training for developers	6
6.2.3	Code reviews	4
6.3.1	Identification of new security vulnerabilities and associated management	4
6.3.2	Validation of inventory of custom and bespoke software *	4
6.3.3	Critical- or high-vulnerabilities are patched within 30 days	3
6.4.3	Validation of inventory of JavaScript and associated authorization and justification of necessity.	2
6.5.1	Validation that change control procedures are being followed and correctly documented	3
7.2.3	Changes in user privileges are approved by authorized personnel	6



Reduce  
fallibility

## How can we improve human performance?

- Mandatory training
- Peer-evaluation
- Fatigue management



Reduce  
fallibility

## How can we improve human performance?

- Mandatory training
  - All users (as in 12.6.3)
  - All IT people
  - All information security people
- Purple-team exercises (trains the blue team)
- Manage stress and burn-out  
(especially in the SOC)



Learn from  
errors and  
incidents

How can we *engineer* or *compensate* or *reduce* to make sure this doesn't happen again?

- Formal post-incident review
- Contributory factor analysis
- Requires a *Just Culture*



Learn from  
errors and  
incidents

How can we *engineer or compensate or reduce* to make sure this doesn't happen again?

- Formal post-incident review
- Contributory factor analysis
- Requires a *Just Culture*

10.7.3 – Causes of control failure

12.10.6 – IRP modified according to lessons learned

# Establishing a Just Culture

Learn from  
errors and  
incidents

**RSA**Conference2022

San Francisco & Digital | June 6 – 9

#RSAC

**TRANSFORM**

SESSION ID: HUM-R02

## Lessons From Aviation: Building a Just Culture in Cybersecurity

**John Elliott**

Consultant and Pluralsight Author

@withoutfire

0:01 / 46:25

**How do we change from  
“doing cybersecurity” to  
being cybersecure?**

# Summary

Lessons from safety-critical industries

## 1. Engineer fallibility out

How can we make it so that a human error doesn't affect anything?

## 2. Compensate for fallibility

How can we catch human errors before they have an effect?

- In business-as-usual operations
- In rare events
- Continual assurance checks to catch issues before they have an effect

## 3. Reduce fallibility

How can we improve human performance?

## 4. Learn from errors and incidents

How can we *engineer* or *compensate* or *reduce* to make sure this doesn't happen again?