

South African cybersecurity trends for 2019

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As we enter the new year, it's worth taking stock of the opportunities - and the likely cybersecurity threats - lying ahead.



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The world is in a state of flux as ongoing political turmoil and the accelerating pace of change brought by powerful new technologies continue to disrupt the status quo. And as our lives become increasingly digitised, the matter of cybersecurity is gaining ground as one of the defining issues of our time.

The World Economic Forum recently placed cybersecurity as the number 5 global risk for doing business, while the Allianz Risk Barometer placed cybersecurity as the top concern among South African businesses in 2018.

Despite its importance, only 11% of global organisations conduct continuous cybersecurity awareness training among staff. This bodes ill for the millions of businesses and workers who remain vulnerable to increasingly sophisticated cyber criminals.

What are some of the main cybersecurity trends we can expect to see over the next 12 months? Here's a shortlist based on

what we're seeing in our work around the globe:

The scary sophistication of cyber criminals

Over the past few years, cybercriminals have matured their tools to the point where they have developed capabilities that were once the reserve of nation states.

As cyberattacks have evolved, an entire ecosystem of fraud has been created where stolen data is used in the service of other crimes: for example, a breach of hospital patient records could lead to false prescriptions being made out for rare or highly-controlled medicines, which are then sold on the black market.

According to one recent study, the global cybercrime economy generated \$1.5-trillion last year. In South Africa, cybercrime now accounts for 55% of all gross bank losses.

Cybercrime a matter of national security

With the world becoming increasingly digitised, it's no longer unthinkable that a cyberattack could shut down an entire electricity grid or even the water supply to a town or municipality.

South Africa's Defence Minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula recently said the country is paying attention to cybercrime "at the highest level". And with the pending implementation of the Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity Bill, expect cybersecurity to be a key policy issue in 2019.

The imitation game

Existing attack methods, such as phishing, will be made all the more effective thanks to improved social engineering and better data correlation. Flawless phishes are likely to give business owners sleepless nights, intensifying the need for awareness training to fix gaps in the human firewall.

Monetising past cybercrime successes

Following a slew of high-profile data breaches involving hundreds of millions of users over the past few years, there's a good chance that the user details gained from these breaches will be used in new attacks. This could be the year we learn more about the motives of the data thieves and why they've been harvesting so much financial and healthcare data.

SMEs are easy targets

In 2019, attackers are likely to shift their attention away from large enterprises, that can afford and are starting to implement comprehensive cybersecurity, to SMEs. The small business sector is attractive for their IP, cash flow and relatively limited security maturity, making it easier to breach their defences.

African SMEs are particularly vulnerable as our adoption of cybersecurity tools is still behind the more developed regions, leaving many businesses vulnerable to attack.

New technologies offer some respite

Thankfully, cybersecurity professionals are not without new tools to combat the rising threat posed by cyber criminals. Technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) will start taking over some of the work of analysing data in the search for existing or potential vulnerabilities and breaches.

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