

CASE STUDY

Telkom invests in a culture of cybersecurity awareness with KnowBe4 training

Redefining a culture of security awareness to ensure corporate and personal security for employees

Telkom South Africa (SA), a leading telecommunications service provider, invested in ongoing employee training and development to ensure cybersecurity awareness and compliance. In an evolving cybersecurity landscape that places employees and organisations at risk of fraud, theft and infiltration, this level of training is critical to ensure corporate compliance to privacy/data protection laws and individual security.

Telkom had undergone a process to review and improve its security solutions and systems as part of its commitment to manage cybersecurity as one of its top strategic risks. During the course of this analysis, the company identified employees as the weakest point in its cybersecurity defences and realised the need to provide internal training to ensure that employees became the last line of defence, not the first line of attack.

“We identified a gap in terms of employee training and awareness around IT and cybersecurity, so we entered into the process of selecting the vendor that could best partner with us to provide this service,” says Eseu Choma, Senior Manager, Information Security Assurance, Telkom SA.

“Popcorn Training, a KnowBe4 company, met all our requirements and provided us with a subscription that was in line with our pockets.”

Overcoming the challenge of people’s careless online behaviour

For Telkom, it was critical that the training offering not only meet budget requirements, but that it be as extensive and engaging as possible.

It had to change the culture of thinking within the company and provide employees with the tools they needed to remain aware outside of the organisation as well.

“We protect our entire network, invest in intelligent systems and solutions, but our employees are always vulnerable targets to cyber criminals. If not trained, they are most likely to live careless lives online.” he explains.

“We wanted to change our approach from one that just sets goals and box ticking exercises to one that changed the culture and engaged with people on what they should do for both the company and themselves. We wanted people to change their internal culture as well, so they always led the most secure cyber life.”

Three key elements comprised the cybersecurity training process: the learning platform, the baseline phishing assessment (phishing simulator), and the Phish Alert Button (PAB). The learning content was developed for the South African audience and included focused and relevant information that didn’t bombard the users. The training had to be short, smart and targeted so that employees could take the training sessions in under 10 minutes.

“The Popcorn Training content takes as little as three minutes to complete, getting the entire message across quickly and efficiently,” says Choma.

“This was a huge differentiator for us, as I believe it’s critical that training be short in order to be effective and ensure company-wide uptake. We took their content, put an internal flavour to it, with KnowBe4’s assistance. We included recordings from management and security teams to set the scene and the motivation for participating in the training overall.”

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KnowBe4 worked closely with Choma to enable the end-user survey feature in the console. This allowed them to get the overall feedback from users on the effectiveness of the training. The surveys allowed for Telkom employees to rate and review the content and to assess its effectiveness and reach. It was an unmitigated success, achieving a rating of 4.7 out of 5 from more than 5,000 employees.

“The second step was to install a phishing simulator, one that was focused not just on improvement, but on encouraging interactive thinking,” says Choma.

“We wanted our employees to think twice with every click. The first test saw a number of people fail and we plan on running a second test later in the process.”

A culture of success

As part of the company's efforts to create company-wide engagement and awareness, Telkom ran a “Spot the Phish” game that was focused on spotting malicious emails. It was a 15-20-minute gamified tutorial that was initially concerning to Choma—the length well over the 10-minute maximum he preferred—and yet managed to achieve a 4.8 out of 5 rating, 95% positive feedback, and impressive employee engagement. One user commented, ***“I thought I knew it all about phishing attacks, but I learned something new today. Thank you very much for the information.”***

“In the final phase we deployed the PAB. Since we deployed, our employees have reported more than 8,000 emails,” says Choma.

“This is proof that our employees are becoming knowledgeable and capable when it comes to cybersecurity. These reports have also led us to uncover some of the gaps in our security defences, which we have subsequently reconfigured and addressed.”

The KnowBe4 engagement was a complete success for Telkom SA, introducing relevant and targeted training materials to a wide-ranging and diverse employee pool and achieving impressive engagement targets.

KnowBe4 worked closely with Telkom to customise the offering and create a training platform that worked within their specific requirements and goals.

“The team was outstanding, always available to help and explain technical requirements and ensure the platform is easy to work with,” concludes Choma.

“We managed to get amazing support from top management and have achieved impressive engagement targets. Overall, we have had more than 12,000 employees take part in the campaign with an average of 11,000 training completions per module across four different modules.”