S2E1: Transcript
Leadership in a Time of Transition
Season Introduction with
ISF CEO Steve Durbin

Tavia Gilbert: Welcome to the ISF Podcast, from the Information Security Forum, the leading authority on cyber, information security, and risk management. I'm Tavia Gilbert, and I'm glad to welcome you back to another cutting-edge conversation tailored to CISOs, CTOs, CROs, and other global security pros.

In every episode of the ISF Podcast, CEO Steve Durbin speaks about rule breakers, collaborators, culture builders, and business creatives who manage their enterprise with vision, transparency, authenticity, and integrity. And he brings that conversation to you, your teams, and your partners.

Today, Steve and I discuss the upcoming episodes in our second season, which focuses on Leadership in a Time of Transition. Over the next several weeks, we'll be bringing you five conversations with a fascinating array of experts.

We start our season with an interview with retired Southwest Airlines captain and former US Navy aviator Tammie Jo Shults, who received wide acclaim when, on April 17, 2018, she and her crew successfully landed a Boeing 737 after catastrophic engine failure, saving the lives of 148 people.

Next in the series, we bring you an interview with global business insurance leader Dame Inga Beale, the former CEO of Lloyd's of London, and the only female CEO in its more than 300-year history, followed by an interview with Kate Montague, an actor and expert voice coach with a background in body-led psychotherapy.

Kate Montague's conversation with Steve will be followed by one with Shoshana Zuboff, retired Harvard Business School professor and the writer of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.

Our series wraps up in conversation with innovative physicist Kate Stone, a non-traditional problem solver who has creatively complex challenges, both personal and professional.

What links these diverse experts together, and what will they have to offer you and your teams of security professionals? I'll let Steve tie it all together.

Steve Durbin: Security needs to continually look for new ways of doing things, new approaches to be successful, because the space is changing so very, very rapidly. And so what we've compiled here in five podcasts is a different set of perspectives around challenges that are not actually dissimilar, when you unpick them, from some of the ones that security professionals are needing to deal with.

So if you think about Tammie Jo, for instance, so Tammie Jo talks about how to respond in a crisis, in a breach. She talks about the role of teamwork, she talks about the role of leadership in getting you through that. And she brings it very much alive through her story of how to land a plane that doesn't have any engines.

If you then move on to, to Dame Inga, what Dame Inga talks about is enabling change through diversity. So again, if we look at the parallels within security, you've got workforce challenges, where, again, to overcome that you have to look outside the traditional. There aren't sufficient people. So you have to do something different. That may well be employing people without the right skillsets as you go on this transformational journey. And so she provides some real insights into how to do that effectively and this kind of leadership that is required to pull that off and be successful.

If we then move to Kate Montague—what Kate is talking about is communication. We've spent a lot of time in podcasts talking about the need for soft skills, the way in which Chief Information Security Officers need to develop those sorts of skills. We've talked about that in our research. And Kate, I think, really brings to life some of

the ways in which people can do that through some of the examples that she talks about.

Shoshana, I mean, Shoshana Zuboff is really, for me, then, onto probably one of the biggest challenges that anybody faces, which is the challenge of all-pervasive technology. Particularly at the moment, of course, where everybody is in the home, so you've got home working, you've got surveillance in the home with things like Alexa and Siri. And she gives some real sort of insights into all of that, which I think is very relevant, again, for the security community, because we're having to deal with that. We're having to try to come up with solutions to those challenges.

And then I think the series finishes really quite nicely with a very personal perspective from Kate Stone, who is this creative scientist that is really dealing or has had to deal with not just the impact of technology, but actually a very personal invasion of privacy. And she, I think, does two things: First, highlights the challenge that can bring, and also gives a very personal insight into the impact, along with some suggestions as to how we can perhaps better deal with personal information and the way that that is used, managed, and really handled. And I, and I think we're seeing some of that as well, coming through with things like, you know, the changes to some of the Californian laws at the moment, and also with things like GDPR.

Tavia Gilbert: Mm-hmm.

Steve Durbin: So it's very, very current. So it brings it round to security, privacy, being something that is personal, and that, if we weave all of that together, I think, demonstrates the link with the fact that security people need to think outside the box. You can't continue to do what you've always done, because everything is changing so very, very rapidly. And so we've, we've sort of compiled five different perspectives on some of the key challenges that people are facing, that if you take away and think about them, I think gives some really good insights into how you can adapt some of the way in which you have to operate as a security professional.

Tavia Gilbert: Is there a main thing that people need to start shifting their thinking around, their practices around urgently?

Steve Durbin: I think there is. I think, I've said this before many times, I think that very often we talk about technology, you know, we get sucked into technology. I think Kate Stone makes this very, very strong point about technology being frictionless, about the fact that people need friction. We're very tactile people. And so we create these different environments, which really are quite alien for us.

And so I think that the one thing in it is that we need to recover the perspective around people, around the fact that everything that we do actually is not technology-related, it's people-related, because people are at the heart of it. Everything we do impacts people, people have a role to play in the successful implementation. And I think it's all too easy for us to forget that.

And if we do that, then I think that opens up the mind much more to the way in which we need to work collaboratively to the way in which we need to perhaps embrace diversity, difference, as a means to really overcoming some of the major challenges that we have within the security and technology space.

Tavia Gilbert: What is the mistake that people are making blindly? You know, I think it's easier to change things that one is aware of, but is there a blind spot for the security industry that you wish they could become aware of, and that thinking like these creative conversations might spark in their minds?

Steve Durbin: Yeah, I think there is. I think that the real danger is that we become very much fixated on software, on technology, to solve some of the problems. So we, we lean on, you know, perhaps artificial intelligence to solve some of our security issues. And of course it has a role to play. You know, nobody would pretend for one moment that technology doesn't have a role to play, of course it does. But it has to go hand-in-hand with people.

And I think that increasingly, you know, we're looking because of some of the challenges we face in terms of lack of skills, perhaps lack of resources, budget, and so on, we're looking for silver bullets where there are none. And there's no shortage of vendors out there that will talk to you about the latest product that will solve whatever problem it is that you've got.

And the other thing I think that everybody is suffering from is lack of time, because everything is moving so very, very quickly. It takes a very, very brave or mature or insightful, call it what you will, individual to actually step back and take time out, you know, to take the sort of two to three minutes that Kate Montague talks about, to reset, to then sort of go again and actually think it through.

And I think that because we've shortened the response time from a security standpoint, you know, if you spot something you have to respond to it very, very quickly—we've perhaps forgotten that by pausing, by taking breath, we might come up with a better solution. Now, in certain instances, of course, we can overcome some of that through artificial intelligence, through the use of technology. But what that should be doing is then giving us more time to focus on the areas where AI and technology perhaps isn't as good, where we really actually have the upper hand.

So I think it's, from a CISO standpoint and from a business standpoint, it's about really trying to perhaps take a broader-based view as to how you're going to deal with some of the challenges that you know about. How are you going to deal with some of the challenges that you know will come, but you don't know from where, and how you're going to better equip the people in your business to respond effectively to those things. And I think that again, you know, if I go back to thinking about some of the stuff that Tammie Jo's talking about yes, alright, you train as a pilot for things to go wrong,

Tavia Gilbert: Right.

Steve Durbin: and you hope that that training kicks in. It's very, very similar in the security environment, you know, we have to train our people for the day that there is a breach, for the day that something goes wrong. Of course you hope that it doesn't happen, but you, at the back of your mind, there's always this thought that it may well do. And people will get you out of that. Technology won't.

Tavia Gilbert: So even though we have technology, we have to concentrate on human decision-making.

Steve Durbin: Yes, I think that's right. I think that you can't decouple the two things. Technology is pretty worthless without human intervention, I would say. And increasingly, good human intervention probably requires the support of technology.

Tavia Gilbert: Mm-hhm, yes. I think one of our earliest conversations was, I remember you saying that you look at technology as a tool in your back pocket, but you put it away when the job you want to use that tool for is done, rather than staying tied to technology all the time. And it seems a bit counterintuitive that in running businesses that rely on digital technology to function, we have to step away from that to clearly see how that technology can be a tool, and how to deal with the problems with that technology breaking down, but keep focused on being present, being aware, taking two- or three-minute breaks to remember what we are in service of.

Steve Durbin: I think that's probably very true. I think, as well, if you look at the majority of people's experience through the pandemic, through being shut away, I'm not aware of anybody who has leapt out of bed in the morning and said, you know, I must now grab my favorite bit of technology to do my job. Of course, people will pick up their iPhones and you know, scan through and that kind of thing. But I'm talking about the world of work, not that sort of broader basis, vital piece.

And what people have progressively lost is human interaction. That's what they crave. So when you actually put them back together, if you're fortunate enough to be able to put them back together, and lots of people aren't of course at the moment, but if you can do that, then the benefit, the richness of the interaction is far superior to what people have unfortunately had to get used to using technology. That's something that will cause them to leap out of bed in the morning.

That's the difference for me. Technology is a tool. Technology is useful. But actually real magic happens when you put people together. That's where the alchemy takes place. That's where people decide how they're going to use the tools for improvement, for differentiation, for transformation, for all of those things that we so often talk about.

And so we're working at the moment in a very false environment where, you know, again, back to Kate Stone's point, that we've removed friction. And yet what we actually crave is friction, which is why people are going back to, why I go back to reading books, real books, that I can feel, that I can touch, why I sketch out my ideas on bits of paper these days, as opposed to on a screen. And you know, I'm somebody who really embraced not having to carry paper because of course I traveled so much, but I've gone retro. And I think it's better, actually. I think that my thought processes are probably much richer through using paper. And then of course, you transfer them onto technology because you then share them that way and, and store them that way and so on. But the creativity works better off technology.

Now, lots of people will disagree with that. Lots of people will say that, you know, they can code it and they can do it all sorts of things. And that's, that's very different. But I still think that if you boil it down, the real creativity occurs off technology. You can use technology to aid some of it, but technology, artificial intelligence, is not creative, I would suggest.

Tavia Gilbert: I want to turn the conversation to the skills shortage a little bit. And you've already mentioned that Dame Inga Beale talked about being diverse in her hiring, being open to new talent. You and I have talked about the skills shortage a lot. I guess I'm not really aware of the scope of the skill shortage. So that's my first question, I'm just personally curious how lacking is it? What increase is needed to make it really a robust, thriving, appropriate-responding workforce for the security industry?

Steve Durbin: If you look at what people ideally are looking for, they're looking for experience. Well, experience isn't something that you get without experiencing it. Sounds obvious. And so there is a shortage of experienced people who have some of the skillsets traditionally to work in security, but I've always said that that's because we're looking in the wrong place.

So is there a skills shortage? Yes, there is a skills shortage of trained-up, experienced individuals who've been through the security processes, who understand how to respond to a breach, who can do all of the network configurations and security modeling

that's required and the architecture builds and that kind of thing. There aren't enough of them. Okay, I get that.

But you have to ask the question whether or not you actually need all of that. Or shouldn't you be looking at bringing people through the different levels who've got other skills that are in short supply within security? So the challenge that security faces is how to remain relevant to the business, how to really add value to the business.

So we're talking about people having to understand the way in which a business functions. So we're talking about strategy, we're talking about sales, talking about marketing, we're talking about people. So we're back to training, for instance. Well, we can take people from those spaces across the company, and we can train them and support them in acquiring some of the security skills that are required.

Very, very difficult to train somebody in some of those more softer, emotionally intelligent skills that, actually, security professionals now need to be much more effective in their roles. So we can teach some of the harder skills to people who have high degrees of emotional intelligence. Very much more difficult to do the other way around.

So that's one of the ways of overcoming the skills shortage, it's about really looking outside. And I think that, you know, Dame Inga goes very much further when she talks about diversity, because she doesn't just constrain herself to pure skill, she covers the need for inclusion, which is entirely different as well, but still very necessary.

And if you look at just a very simple demographic across most security functions in most organizations, you'll find the vast majority of the people in security roles are male. If I look at the ISF membership, that is the case. If I look at the number of women who attended our Congress, for instance, as a good metric, it was probably about a quarter of the total.

And we've talked a lot about the fact that, you know, from an ISF standpoint, of course, we're somewhat different in that we've got a 50/50 balance in terms of our mix. And so I think it's interesting in

Series Two, that we've chosen to really seek out insight from five women.

Tavia Gilbert: Mm-hmm.

Steve Durbin: That wasn't by accident, that was by design, to give it slightly different perspective. And I think that comes through in some of the conversations that we have. You know, they are slightly more free ranging, they are slightly more creative, I would suggest. They give a different perspective. And I think that that's hugely valuable.

Tavia Gilbert: Those softer skills, that emotional intelligence is something that culturally is celebrated in women and not as invited in males.

Steve Durbin: I think what you get is the best of both worlds. So you get a different debate. I'm generalizing obviously, but if you have a pure male environment, it can tend to being quite testosterone-filled. It's, you know, everybody's sort of puffed up, and it is probably a more aggressive environment.

I think if you blend, you get better insight into problem-solving. I think you, as you said, you know, you have some of those softer skills that are much more naturally brought. That's not to say that men don't have those. Of course they do. But I'm talking about the mixture. And for me, it's always been really important to try to mix teams. I think that, you know, you should do that cross-culturally as well, because there are very different ways of looking at problems and problem-solving.

And that's where I think you really begin to benefit, from a business standpoint. And I think that again, if you listen to Inga and some of the things that she was trying to do, you know, it was a massive transformation project that she was trying to bring about at Lloyd's. And so she had to do things that were different, and she had to try to change some of the culture that was embedded in the organization, and just provide a different way of doing things.

And I think that's important. It isn't about being necessarily critical of what's gone before. I think that's, that's a big mistake that people make when they go through transformation projects. You know, you criticize what's gone before. Transformation, for me, is all about evolution. Evolution recognizes that you've moved on from what

was before, and you're on the way to what's in the future. That doesn't mean to say that what was before was right or wrong.

Tavia Gilbert: Right.

Steve Durbin: That's a pure judgment call. What you're doing, though, is you're heading in a different direction, or you're heading for a future direction, or you're evolving, trying to take the best of what you've gathered over a period of time to keep it going with you. And I think that's hugely important from a security standpoint, because security professionals are being asked to evolve on an almost daily basis. And what you don't want to do is to lose some of the good stuff that was built up within any sort of security environment.

You know, there were reasons why certain policies were produced, for instance. It doesn't mean to say that you throw all of that out. You know, you might want to simply add to that, or indeed some of those policies, processes, procedures may well be entirely appropriate for the new environment. So that's what I mean by evolution. And I think that, you know, that requires a slightly different skillset. So it isn't just about fast response, change. It's an evolutionary transformation.

Tavia Gilbert: Thinking about Shoshana Zuboff and talking about surveillance capitalism: These big tech companies are male-run. You know, the big players right now who are creating frictionless technology that is not building society, but exploiting attention in society, it's all men. I wonder what platform, what technology women would make, where it would be different.

Steve Durbin: Or a different question might be, why is it that those corporations are so heavily male-dominated? What is holding back or preventing a more diverse kind of environment in some of those major corporations? You know, that's probably something that, no doubt, people at Harvard and MIT and all sorts of other places are looking into as we speak.

But I think that if we look at the proportion of security leaders that are women, you know, we need to understand if we bring it right the way back specifically to the profession, we need to understand why we're not encouraging more women to join, to move through those

different levels of competency, to run its security departments in large corporations. And that's an interesting perspective in itself, I think.

You know, I don't know the answer to it. I think that certainly we need to continue to try to unpick some of that. And if you go right the way back to, you know, the skills shortage, that's one of the ways of potentially addressing it.

And I think, actually, that the pandemic has given us some potential opportunities in this regard. The pandemic has completely broken this old-fashioned notion that for a corporation to be effective, you have to have everybody under the same roof, working so you can observe them. Now, of course, there are some businesses that cannot work effectively with people spread all around the country, all around the world, I get that. But very many can, and indeed have had to, during the pandemic. And they've done it very, very well.

So we're starting to see a lot of organizations really considering actively how they can continue to work with a workforce that is actually living where they want to live, as opposed to living where they have to live in order to conduct a job. So that's changing the whole nature of the way in which our cities have made up in which society functions from a work standpoint. And of course it brings a huge amount of added work efforts from a security perspective, to try to make sure that these different environments that are out there are at least at the level that the organization is comfortable with in order for somebody to work effectively from that remote location or from home or wherever it might be.

But that is changing things. So what's that doing? That's opening up a vast number of opportunities. It's opening up opportunities for people who have had to juggle childcare, for instance, because they can work from home. It's opened up opportunities for people who, for whatever reason, have been unable to travel. Maybe it's the disabled, maybe it's people who, you know, aren't able to, because they don't have access to some of the transportation links that are required.

It's also opened up geographical constraints that were there in the past. You know, you don't have to be in one particular physical

location. You could be anywhere. You know, there are people who are providing services to organizations in London that are living in Bali, that are living in the United States that are living in, you know, all sorts of different areas. And why not?

So I think that the pandemic has shown that we don't have to all congregate in one location, but you still have to have the ability to interface with people and to see people and to work with people. And so that I think presents a slightly different view on the impact that the pandemic has had. I don't think it's been all bad. I think there are some little silver linings that we can take that have really, you know, as I say, smashed some of the traditional thinking. For the better, I hope.

Tavia Gilbert: Do you think, then, that the future of the workforce at large is going to be home-working and then coming together a few times a year to be in-person? Because we've talked about the magic that happens with in-person interaction, and we're talking about the facility now that we have to work wherever, whenever.

Steve Durbin: I think that certainly you can have a workforce that does not have to slavishly travel into an office every single day of the week. It depends very much on the jobs that they're doing and the level of interaction that's required. I think that a lot of people are looking at, perhaps, three days from home, two days in the office in the course of a week. Personally, I would be less prescriptive than that. You know, I'd like to think that we need to trust people to do the right thing. And if the right number is three at home and two in the office, well, that's fine, but it may not be, it may be four and one, it may be nine and one, whatever it is.

But I think that that raises some really interesting opportunities, then, for what we do with our office locations, because I think they have to evolve into being what I call collaboration centers. Um, you know, I talk a lot about that at the ISF, you know, our office has to be a collaboration center. So people have to go there, we have to create the right environment for people to be able to comfortably collaborate, to feed off other people when they're there. There is absolutely no point in me moving somebody on a train for an hour and a half from their home to an office if all I'm going to do is have them sit down at a desk and do something they could have done at

home. What is the point of that? I've just wasted three hours of their day. Pointless.

So when people do turn up in an office environment, there has to be a reason for being there which is over and above just doing what you could do from home. And that's why it's about, for me, this collaboration that needs to take place. And so I think you will have organizations that, again, if we go back to the security piece of it, will be looking to provide secure environments for people to work from home where that's appropriate, and that may not be appropriate for everybody. You know, if you're living on the 18th floor, as Bob Geldof points out, with, you know, a one-bedroom flat with three kids, you really don't want to be working from home.

But why does it have to be the office? It can be a, sort of a WeWork-type environment that's local. It can be at a hotel type environment that's local. So I think that that is changing our perspective on the way that we work. And again, from the security standpoint, it is about securing that home environment, if I could call it that. And it's also about making sure that you've got the right level of access with the right permissions and the right security levels for people to be able to then collaborate when they come together as well.

So it introduces a whole range of potential possibilities. The job of security is to also look for some of the pitfalls, and to make sure that we can support some of the way in which the businesses need to necessarily move now in a very proactive way. So for me, it is a really exciting time for CISOs, because everyone talks about playing catch up, but this is a chance to actually get out ahead, to actually look at where things are going to be developing, and to put in place solutions that support the direction that people want to move in and that businesses are actually moving in.

Tavia Gilbert: You don't have an office, do you?

Steve Durbin: No. I, personally? Me, as an individual, you mean?

Tavia Gilbert: Yes. At the ISF.

Steve Durbin: No, I don't have an office.

Tavia Gilbert: You have a series of conference rooms where you have meetings.

Steve Durbin: Yeah. That's what I do, I have no, no office.

Tavia Gilbert: That's unusual.

Steve Durbin: Um, I've always preferred not to have an office. I've always preferred to be working with people. And I think that if you have an office, you—I mean, lots of people will disagree with me, right? This is a very personal view. I've always found that offices actually cut you off from what's going on in an organization. I think that you get a far richer experience of actually what's happening if you spend time talking to people, if you spend time actually moving around. And yes, of course you need space to do stuff, but I'm equally comfortable doing that in a conference room as I am an open plan environment with people around me.

I mean, sometimes, of course, there are things that I would need to do that do require private space, but that's no different from somebody, say, who runs HR or finance or any of these other functions. So no, I made a conscious decision, gosh, years ago, not to have an office. I haven't had an office for, gosh, you'd probably have to go back about 20 years.

Tavia Gilbert: Wow.

Steve Durbin: [laughing]

Tavia Gilbert: I remember going into the ISF offices for the first time, and they are unusual: Glass conference rooms, open plan, no office for the head, no offices really at all.

Steve Durbin: It's a different sort of culture that you have to work to create. And I think that that's one of the big challenges for organizations when, you know, I've been talking about all the different opportunities that having people spread all around brings, but ultimately you still want to have some of that culture permeating through the organization.

And it just means that your leaders, and everybody in the organization, actually, needs to be very aware that they've got to work a little bit harder with people who perhaps are new to the organization to bring them in, to involve them in lots of different ways. And there's all sorts of ways in which you can do that, you

know, there's coffee hours and also, you know, lunches and all of that kind of thing that you can do remotely, too. But it's important. It's hugely important, because you're trying to replace some of that old interaction that you would naturally get in an office.

And obviously when you bring everybody together, then, whether that be, to your point, on a quarterly basis or six monthly basis or whatever it is, you build on that even further. But I think that what we've found is you get a much richer conversation when you do bring people back together, because they actually want to interact, collaborate. And that, for me, just reinforces the need for offices to be collaboration centers, because the interactions you get in those environments, when you bring people in, are so much richer and better because people are there for the right reason. They're not just there because they have to be. And they haven't just spent, you know, however long it is getting into the office for the last four days, and this comes at the end of that rather grueling period. I think there's a much more positive future of work as far as I'm concerned.

Tavia Gilbert: It's encouraging to be reminded of the silver linings that the last year of disruption has brought, and I hope it is for you. I hope we are leaving you on a high note, a reminder that having worked turned inside out may allow for a healthier, more positive future for our own work when things get back to some kind of normal.

When we return with our next episode, Steve will bring us the first Leadership in a Time of Transition interview with Captain Tammie Jo Shults. Steve and Captain Shults discuss servant-based leadership, and the role of hope and faith during a time of crisis, the importance of building trust with your team, what her parents' example taught her as navigated becoming one of the first female F/A-18 Hornet pilots, and more. Here's Captain Shults, with a preview:

Captain Tammie Jo Shults: I do think that adversity that we meet along the way is part of our grooming, it's part of what prepares us. And I don't think it prepares us just for ourselves. I think that's what prepares us to make a difference. And in this time when it's very easy to have our eyes turned inward, and, how can I survive, or how can I get on top of this? Often if we get our eyes sweeping side to side in a scan

that goes beyond self, we'll find it's a lot easier to rise up above adversity when you're not doing it by yourself. And helping other people can sometimes help you more than you help them.

Tavia Gilbert: We look forward to bringing you the full conversation. In the meantime, we invite you to tune in to our catalogue of video and podcast episodes, all of which you can find at securityforum.org. If you feel as though today's conversation was of value, you can subscribe to the audio feed wherever you get your podcasts, and you can recommend us. We'd be so grateful if you would. Growing our subscriber numbers helps us reach new audiences and helps us continue to bring you these timely discussions.

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The ISF Podcast is produced by Talkbox and Tavia Gilbert. Music by Aleksander Filipiak. Assistant producer Katie Flood. Mix and master by Bryan Barney. Thanks for listening.