

Navigating cybersecurity challenges in Bangladesh and beyond: Insights from Viktor Markopoulos



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MEHNAZ IRTIKA AND MD. RIDWAN SAKIB ANJUM

Markopoulos, a cybersecurity expert from Bitcrack Cyber Security, made headlines for uncovering a colossal data breach in Bangladesh. His discovery, which revealed the personal data of millions from a government website, not only shed light on severe security oversights but also sparked a nationwide dialogue on the urgency of data protection and privacy.

For countries like Bangladesh, cybersecurity is quickly becoming a central concern. In an exclusive interview, we dive into the dynamic world of cybersecurity with Viktor Markopoulos, who shares his experiences, hurdles, and perspectives on the evolving landscape of cybersecurity, especially in the context of Bangladesh and developing nations.

What inspired you to pursue a career in cybersecurity, and what have been some of the most significant challenges you've faced?
My fascination with computers was the main driving force behind my career choice. I explored various paths in computer science engineering before finding my true calling in cybersecurity. The biggest challenge in this field is the relentless need to stay updated. The technology world is ever-evolving, and you're constantly learning. Keeping pace with the latest techniques and trends is both demanding and crucial.

Can you share with us your journey in the field of cybersecurity and the key milestones of your career?

I began my cybersecurity journey in university, learning more through contests and challenges. Then, I delved into bug bounties and disclosure programs, where identifying system vulnerabilities could lead to rewards. A significant milestone was being invited to a live hacking event for top security specialists. This field excites me, and finding a job I genuinely enjoy while growing, exploring, and increasing security measures has been a pivotal part of my journey.

How do you see the global landscape of cybersecurity evolving, and what trends should we be most aware of?

Cybersecurity is becoming vital in every technological aspect, especially with the rise of IoT and industrial systems. The threat landscape has grown immensely recently, with various groups targeting vulnerable systems and individuals. It's essential to be aware of these evolving threats to stay ahead.

From your expertise, how would you assess the current state of cybersecurity in Bangladesh?

Like many other nations, it's quite impossible to remain a hundred percent safe from cybersecurity attacks. However, in Bangladesh, I have noticed that when organisations there recognise an issue, they act quicker than in some other places. There's room for improvement, but the responsiveness is a positive sign.

How does Bangladesh's cybersecurity infrastructure compare to other countries you have experience with?

Like many countries, Bangladesh faces vulnerability risks, especially when decentralising security. Staying updated and proactive is critical for any country's cybersecurity health. However, I have observed Bangladesh's authorities taking action faster than many countries. The future for Bangladesh looks bright in cybersecurity as long as the leaders remain conscious of the vulnerabilities and act swiftly on them.

What are the areas where Bangladesh could improve its cybersecurity measures?

In my experience, critical data exposure is an issue not just in Bangladesh but globally. Improving authorisation protocols, regular system maintenance, implementing more robust firewalls, and timely patching are crucial for enhancing cybersecurity.

What role could the Bangladeshi government play in enhancing national cybersecurity?

As the first line of defence, the Bangladeshi

government has a pivotal role in strengthening our national cybersecurity. By implementing comprehensive cybersecurity regulations similar to Europe's GDPR, they can significantly enhance security measures in both the public and private sectors. Such regulations would provide a robust framework for protecting data and deterring cyber threats.

How important is public awareness and education in cybersecurity for a country like Bangladesh?

Public awareness and education in cybersecurity are crucial, especially in a technology-driven world like ours. It's not only the government's job to safeguard data. We, as individuals, must be vigilant and informed to protect ourselves from cyber threats and scams. Educating the public on basic cybersecurity principles is essential for national security.

Looking back at your career, what advice would you give to young professionals aspiring to enter the field of cybersecurity?

I advise young professionals to focus on the journey, not just the destination. Cybersecurity is a field driven by passion and the constant need to stay ahead. Embrace every learning opportunity and remain curious. This endless pursuit of knowledge will make you successful in this ever-evolving field.

What is your opinion on the potential of cybersecurity career opportunities worldwide and in Bangladesh?

The potential for cybersecurity careers is enormous, both worldwide and in Bangladesh. With the rapid expansion of technology, especially with the integration of AI, the demand for skilled cybersecurity professionals is skyrocketing. I've witnessed incredible talent in Bangladesh, particularly during the bug bounty programs, which show vast potential in this region.

What is your opinion on AI's usage in cybersecurity? Do you see it as a friend or foe?

I definitely see AI as a friend in the realm of cybersecurity. It's a potent tool that can be leveraged for both defensive and offensive strategies. However, it's crucial to remember that AI can't replace the human element in cybersecurity. The intuition and expertise that humans bring to the table are indispensable.

Securing tomorrow: A vision for a safer digital world

Viktor Markopoulos' insights shed light on the dynamic world of cybersecurity. His journey underscores the necessity of continuous learning and the importance of adapting to emerging digital threats. Along with his keen observation of the potential the folks of our country hold in the cybersecurity arena, he stresses the crucial roles of government regulation, public-private collaboration, and public education in enhancing national cybersecurity.

For those aspiring to enter the cybersecurity field, his advice is to cherish the journey and stay curious. While there is still a lot of work to be done, Markopoulos views the future of cybersecurity with optimism, particularly in developing nations like Bangladesh. His perspective offers a blueprint for a safer digital future, for all.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. - Software Engineer



Deadline: January 31

Eligibility:

- BSc in Computer Science and Engineering from any reputed university.
- Should have good knowledge of algorithms, data structure, and design patterns.
- Solid knowledge and experience of Java development, Java 8 and/or J2EE frameworks.

Minimum experience: 1-3 years
Apply through the Jobs section of Walton Bangladesh's website.

Robi Axiata Limited - Manager, Automation (IT Operations)



Deadline: January 28

Eligibility:

- Expertise in AI/ML platforms like TensorFlow, PowerBI and automation platforms like RPA.
- Working experience on DevSecOps model, Google Cloud and concept on Touch Free Operation.
- Skills in IT governance, Unix, Oracle, etc.

Minimum experience: 4 years
Apply through the Careers portal of Robi's official website.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) -



Assistant Coordinator, Finance and Accounts (Treasury Operation)

Deadline: February 3

Eligibility:

- Masters degree in, Accounting, Finance, Business Administration, and other related disciplines.
- Prior work experience in Finance and Accounts in a renowned national/international organisation.
- Proven knowledge and firsthand experience of compliance of relevant government rules and regulations, as well as International Financial Reporting Standards/ Bangladesh Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS/BFRS) etc.

Minimum experience: 4 years
Apply through the Careers section of Transparency International Bangladesh's official website.

How to manage work-induced stress as a modern employee

In today's fast-paced and demanding work environments, stress has become an inevitable part of the daily grind. Characterised by tight deadlines, high expectations, and constant connectivity, modern workplaces can take a toll on employees' mental and physical well-being. As such, let's take a look at the causes behind workplace-induced stress and how you, as a modern employee, can manage it.

What causes stress in a workplace?

Work-related stress often arises from various factors that tend to be interconnected. According to an article by the American Psychological Association, the key contributors to workplace stress include inadequate compensation, overwhelming workloads, and limited chances for professional development. Employees who find their work uninteresting or unchallenging might also suffer from stress; as might those who lack autonomy in job-related decisions.

Oftentimes, insufficient social support is a major proponent of workplace stress. When employees feel isolated or lonely at work, they feel disconnected from their social surroundings, which can amplify stress among individuals who may not have a proper support system to share

their concerns, seek advice, or engage in casual conversations. Having colleagues or superiors to discuss work challenges with can provide fresh perspectives and potential solutions. Without this support network, employees may find it difficult to navigate complex issues, increasing their stress levels.

Helpful stress management strategies

Even though workplace stress can often feel like that one annoying companion that never seems to go away, there are some effective strategies you can use to manage and alleviate it, even in a professional setting.

Reality check

According to an article by the University of Rochester Medical Center, the first thing to do when faced with high-pressure workplace situations is to take a moment and assess your thoughts. Are you overthinking the situation? Is the solution simpler than you might think? Consider the impact this immediate problem might have on your reputation or income. Sometimes, what seems overwhelming may be more manageable when viewed objectively.

Time management

Efficient time and priority management are potent stress-busting tools. Begin each day by creating a to-do list, and prioritising tasks based on urgency and importance. Avoid



overloading your schedule and allocate time for potential interruptions.

Take regular breaks

Incorporate hourly mini-breaks into your routine for physical and mental stress relief. Do simple stretches for your shoulders, back, and neck after sitting on your chair for a long time. Also, do not underestimate the importance of lunchtime. It is often the

only time during your office work that you can recharge, step away from your desk, and refresh your mind. So, utilise your breaks as best as you can.

Make realistic commitments

Workplace stress is often caused by taking on more work than you can handle. If you already have a lot of work on your plate, politely decline any additional tasks you may be given. Be realistic about your workload by acknowledging your own limits. If there's a coworker or boss who wants to put too much on your plate, communicate your problem effectively so the stress doesn't accumulate further.

Relax and get comfortable

Integrate short periods of rest into your daily routine. Find a comfortable space, close your eyes, and focus on calming your mind. Practice controlled breathing while repeating a soothing word, such as 'peace' or 'relax'. This simple yet effective exercise can release pent-up tension whenever you may need it to. Some people also relax by visualising a place they love for 5 to 10 minutes - an imaginative exercise which gives them a welcome escape from workplace stressors.

For further help

If you find that workplace-induced stress is

significantly impacting your life, there are several steps you can take to seek further help.

Workplace wellness programs: Check with your employer or HR if your workplace has wellness programs that specifically address stress management. Some companies offer initiatives such as yoga classes, stress reduction workshops, or wellness challenges. Taking advantage of these programs can contribute to a healthier work environment.

Professional counselling services: Seeking the assistance of a mental health professional can be highly beneficial. Psychologists, counsellors, and therapists can provide personalised strategies and a safe space for you to express your thoughts and emotions.

Physical activity: Regular exercise is known to have positive effects on mental health. Consider joining fitness classes or engaging in physical activities that you enjoy. This not only helps manage stress but also contributes to overall well-being.

Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, and prioritising your mental health is crucial for long-term success and happiness in both your personal and professional life. If workplace-induced stress persists, do not hesitate to reach out to professionals who can support you on your journey to well-being.