Global Good Practices

Practice: **Focus awareness-building through a cybersecurity Awareness Month**
#Month

Declaring a month dedicated to cybersecurity awareness can help focus the efforts of many stakeholders and enhance their collaboration, while delivering a strong message to the public, and increasing the effectiveness of capacity building efforts.

Related thematic areas:

Cooperation and community building

Culture and skills

Of particular interest to:

PRIVATE SECTOR

EXPERTS

CIVIL SOCIETY

GOVERNMENT

Description

The National Cybersecurity Awareness Month (NCSAM) is an example of a cybersecurity awareness campaign at national level that builds on the attention provided by declaring a month dedicated to a specific topic to mobilise actors; raise the activity profile; and amplify communication, awareness, and capacity building activities.

The campaign focuses on different topics each year. Each week of the one-month campaign is dedicated to a particular topic, which can vary from awareness building, to practical skills, behaviour, and tools for end-users.
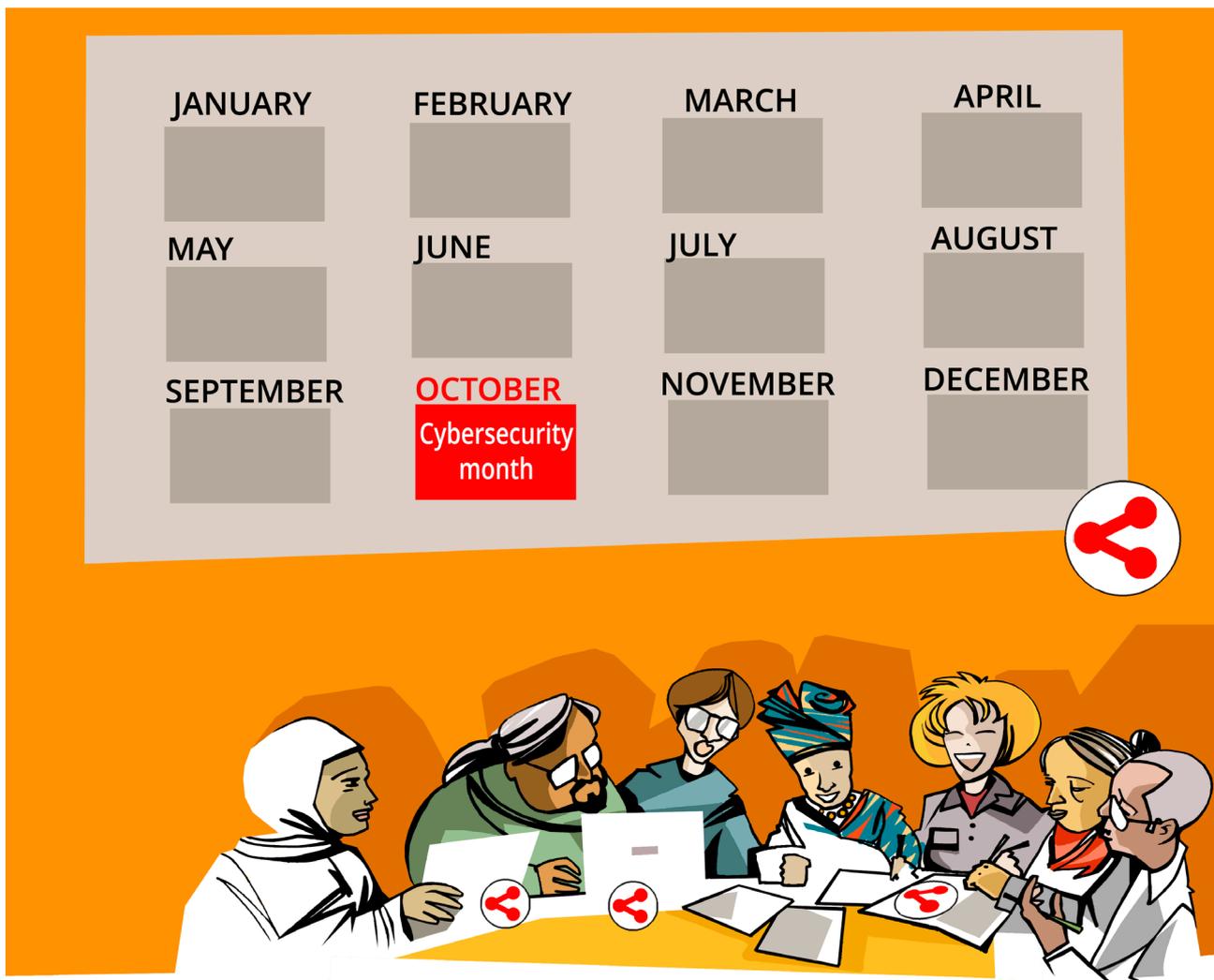
One of the important features of the campaign is a **call to organisations and individuals to become its champions**. Another important feature of the **campaign are the very practical suggestions of how to get involved and contribute**. This includes concrete things to do on social media, at home in the family setting, at school, and at work (e.g. organising a 'brown bag' seminar).

While NCSAM stands on its own as a global good practice, to be supported and adopted by those who are still not promoting it, it is also a pattern for more general practice – that of an awareness month (or week), dedicated to a different topic, where there is a need to provide focus for awareness building on a large scale.

Actors (or who this is for)

National governments, through their bodies in charge of cybersecurity awareness, are the most effective owners of this type of campaign, as they can reach out and mobilise all the other national actors (technical community, academia, business, etc.). However, in cases where this is not possible, other influential national-level actors, such as large universities could also take the leading role in establishing and promoting a national awareness month.

Other stakeholders participating in the campaign have an equally important role. Without their active participation in distributing information and resources and facilitating events, the campaign would have little effect. The campaign should aim to include the business sector, academia, the technical community, and citizens in general.

The big picture

From the capacity building perspective, an awareness-raising campaign such as this practice, contributes first towards engaging stakeholders and sharing a vision, then towards learning and improving the various capacities of the broadest constituency – in this case citizen end-users.

Depending on the available resources and commitment of organisers and partners, an awareness-oriented month can provide many opportunities for learning, including training for concrete competencies and practical skills. It can also be used to provide tools and resources, and thus contribute towards a safer and more effective use of the Internet, related technologies, and applications.

With sufficient international adoption, campaigns of this nature can also promote international cooperation around the targeted topic, and strengthen the widest systemic capacity for the safe use of digital tools and media.

Instructions

• Gather the highest possible level (governmental) support and commitment for the campaign, inspire partners, and share the vision.
• Continuously monitor topics of interest for the campaign in question and identify themes and topics that are most likely to be of relevance for the upcoming campaign, in a timely manner.
• Create communications material around the selected topics, appropriate for partners and end-user audiences.
• Publish calls for partnership, encouraging diverse stakeholders to take part in the campaign.
• Ensure that communications explain concrete and achievable ways to participate, for all stakeholders.
• Use social and traditional media, and face-to-face events to communicate and promote the campaign and its activities.

Timing

A possible timeline:
- D-10 months: Careful monitoring of themes and topics
- D-6 months: Selection of themes and topics covered
- D-6 to -3 months: Work on communications material
- D-3 to -1 month: Distribution of materials and final preparations

Examples

The GFCE's Global Campaign to Raise Cybersecurity Awareness Initiative raises awareness of cyber-related threats and good practices worldwide and empowers citizens with the knowledge and a sense of shared responsibility to practice safe and informed behaviour on the Internet. By leveraging expertise from international partners in the government, academic, non-profit, and private sectors, this cybersecurity awareness campaign initiative works broadly with stakeholders to ensure a safer and more secure Internet for all. The initiative encourages global adoption of October as NCSAM.

Cybersecurity Month:

NCSAM, October, https://staysafeonline.org/ncsam/
ECSM, October, https://cybersecuritymonth.eu/

Other global awareness campaigns:

UN World Cancer Day, 4 February, http://www.un.org/en/events/cancerday/
UN International Disarmament Week, 24–30 October, http://www.un.org/en/events/disarmamentweek/

Source, support, and mentoring

More information on the GFCE's Global Campaign to Raise Cybersecurity Awareness:
https://www.thegfce.com/initiatives/g/global-campaign-to-raise-cybersecurity-awareness

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