

OVAL Board Call – OVAL Board Structure (4/29/2013)

Attendees

Eric Walker - IBM Corp.
Kent Landfield - McAfee Inc.
Tim Keanini – Blast Security
Adam Montville – Tripwire, Inc.
Morey Haber – BeyondTrust, Inc.
Omar Santos – Cisco Systems Inc.
Blake Frantz - Center for Internet Security
Steve Grubb – Red Hat, Inc.
Rob Hollis – ThreatGuard, Inc.
Randy Taylor – ThreatGuard, Inc.
William Munyan – Center for Internet Security
Amaresh Shirsat – Symantec Corporation
Chris Wood – Assuria Limited
Nils Puhlmann

Jon Baker - MITRE
Matt Hansbury - MITRE
Dan Haynes - MITRE
Luis Nunez - MITRE
David Rothenberg - MITRE

Meeting Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this follow up Board call was to continue a conversation around the formalization around the OVAL Board and its roles and responsibilities. During the previous Board call, Dan Haynes provided a draft set of documents, based on the CVE Editorial Board, that laid out both how Board members would be selected and approved and also the roles and responsibilities for Board members.

The discussion around these draft documents generated enough conversation that the group decided a follow up call with the Board would be appropriate to continue the discussion. This follow up call led to a good deal of great conversation and good overall participation.

Document Status and Update

To begin the meeting, Dan Haynes provided an update from the previous Board call until now. He noted that the team had softened the requirements around specific roles within the Board to allow for a Board member to satisfy multiple roles. Specifically, members would now be classified as either Active Members or Emeritus Members. Active Members would be expected to participate in various technical, liaison, and advocate tasks and Emeritus Members would be former board members that have made

significant contributions to OVAL over the years, but were no longer able to continue contributing in the same manner.

Discussion

While discussing the topic, the following points were made:

- Some suggested that while MITRE has previously nominated members for the Board, it would be in the Board's best interest to self-select its members.
- Several folks agreed that softening the specific Board member roles and allowing members to execute various roles, at various times, was the better approach.
- On the topic of Emeritus status, the consensus was that the role made sense.
 - There was some conversation and concern about whether or not an Emeritus member would have any voting rights (if such rights were generally available to members).
 - This topic was a bit split, though a majority seemed to agree that an Emeritus member should not have voting rights.
 - Concern was voiced that by not allowing Emeritus member voting rights, the composition of the Board could be compromised, in a way that favors one type of members over others.
 - It was noted that this issue would be partially addressed by replacing Board seats with new members from the same organization.
 - Additionally, it was agreed that maintaining proportional balance among the Board's composition was important.
 - It was highlighted by the MITRE team that the Emeritus status was designed specifically to recognize great contributions from former Board members, and that not all former Board members would be granted such status.
 - Further, it was pointed out that in addition to the possibility of Emeritus status, members could also be recognized as 'Former Board Members' or even not listed at all (if no or minimal contribution was made) after transitioning off of the Board.

Board Membership Benefits

During the previous Board call, some members asked for more detailed information regarding the benefits of being on the Board. Specifically they pointed out that the draft documents were clear on the expectations of the Board members, but not as clear on what the members were able to actively do as Board members.

Dan asked the group for additional feedback here, asking what types of authority the Board felt was appropriate for members. Some discussion occurred on the topic.

Discussion

Following Dan's questions, several points were made:

- There was some question as to why this was being taken on now. The team pointed out that this has long been something that the team had wanted to formalize and was also specifically requested by several members recently.
- There was some discussion on the topic of voting, with several differing opinions on whether the Board should hold votes at all, and if so, how it would be done.
 - In general, most members felt that some type of voting in at least some cases would be appropriate.
 - Several members stated that while consensus often works well, in some cases it rewards the more vocal members more than it accurately reflects a majority opinion. A voting system could help alleviate some of this.
 - It was suggested that voting could be used as a way to address only very important topics or specific highly controversial topics, thus avoiding such a large number of votes as to limit the value of voting.
 - The MITRE team will give some thought to this topic and propose some type of voting system to address the Board's concerns and to better empower its members.
- Some conversation about the process by which things are promoted from the OVAL Sandbox into the official OVAL Language also happened during this part of the agenda.
 - Board members in general showed some concerns about Sandbox items finding their way directly into the Language.
 - It was suggested that a third stage might be helpful here.
 - Some members reiterated that their customers have high expectations on vendors with regards to OVAL support. Customers in general were not too interested in specific OVAL tests, but rather simply wanted full OVAL support.
 - It was suggested that some type of sub-division of OVAL could help here, specifically, some way of decoupling some of the more experimental or special case type of tests from the official, core Language.
 - A follow up call on this topic was suggested.
- Several members also asked about how the Board could be structured to ensure maximum participation.
 - The MITRE team pointed out that once the roles and responsibilities has been agreed upon and officially published, the team would like to take a pass through the Board list to identify members that haven't been active recently in order to contact them to determine the best course of action.
 - This could result in a number of possibilities including, but not limited to, Emeritus status for those that are not able to be active on the Board.
 - It was widely agreed that an active Board membership is essential to the efficient function of the Board.

Board Member Action Items

As part of the previous Board call, Blake Frantz proposed that the Board be able to take on specific, high value action items as determined by the group. It was asked again of the Board if they were willing to

take on such items from time to time, in order to allow members to accomplish specific things in supporting OVAL.

Discussion

The team asked the Board if an action list of the type described by Blake would be something that they would be willing to support. In general, it seemed that most members would be open to something like this, though it needs to be clear that this is not a membership requirement, but rather an opportunity for members to make significant contributions to the project.

Lastly, it was suggested that any process here be very lightweight to encourage participation.

Developer Days

Lastly, Developer Days 2013 was briefly discussed. Two potential dates were emailed out to the Board email list (week of June 10th and week of June 24th) and a third one (week of July 8th) was also suggested during the call. A call for responses on the Board list to gauge interest and ability to attend any of the potential dates was made. Also, any Board members that had suggestions for topics or were interested in presenting a topic were asked to follow up with the MITRE team to help plan the event.

Conclusions

The conversations during the call led to some good consensus with regards to the concept of an Emeritus status, the need for some type of voting ability for the Board, and that the Board roles & responsibilities were now correctly defined.

Further discussion seems to be necessary for things like how an action item list might work for Board members and the topic of sub-dividing the Language in a way that allows vendors to focus directly on the core OVAL Language tests, selectively implementing certain more special case and/or experimental tests.

Action Items

- MITRE to revise and submit a second draft of the OVAL Board roles and responsibilities documents to the Board list for review.
- MITRE to consider how best to implement a voting system for the Board and communicate the resulting proposal to the Board.
- MITRE to consider a follow up discussion around the topic of sub-dividing the Language in some way.
- Board members to reply in email regarding their availability for a Developer Days event in early summer.