KnowBe4

CASE STUDY Irish Cattle Breeding Federation and Sheep Ireland

Brief Summary

About ICBF and Sheep Ireland: The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) is a non-profit organisation charged with providing cattle breeding information services to the Irish dairy and beef industries. The organisation was set up in 1998 to benefit the agri-food industry, farmers, and wider Irish communities through genetic gain, ensuring sustainable breeding. ICBF is a world leader in cattle genomics and has about 90 employees across two physical sites.

In 2009, Sheep Ireland was designated with the responsibility of increasing the rate of genetic gain in the Irish sheep sector by identifying and promoting the use of rams with more profitable and sustainable genetics. This is achieved by gathering performance data from the top rams in the country and accessing their strengths and weaknesses using a genetic evaluation which is updated weekly to include any new data. The results of these genetic evaluations are then displayed in sales catalogues and online in a simple one to five star rating system, allowing sheep farmers to make a more informed breeding decision when selecting their next stock ram.

Business and Technical Challenges

With all growing organisations, the importance of security awareness is something that is built up over time. Arriving at the organisation nearly five years ago, Jonathan Flack, senior systems administrator, noticed that the culture of security awareness at ICBF and Sheep Ireland was not progressing as it should. On the contrary, it was almost non-existent. *"There was no security awareness within the company when I started,"* Jonathan said. Passwords weren't being changed regularly, and *"everybody knew everybody else's password."* He also noticed the click-through rate on phishing links was particularly high, as people would frequently log into their colleagues' email and open a phishing link out of curiosity. However, despite their best efforts, they never won that free iPad that was promised.

As the organisation grew, Jonathan and his colleague Niall Naughton, Infrastructure team leader, decided to take action by implementing a basic security awareness programme. However, ICBF and Sheep Ireland found that its selected training partner did not provide a suitable service. Jonathan described the cybersecurity training that was offered as "a limited selection" of basic training. The provided training failed to engage the workforce. Jonathan found himself constantly pestering about half of the staff, bombarding them with reminder emails; *"it was just constant chasing."* Reliving the frustration that many senior administrators face, Jonathan recalled: *"they just didn't want to do it. They didn't like it, they didn't enjoy it, and they didn't see the need for it."* He found himself forced to hold a staff meeting to stress the need for security training. The response from the staff was simple: *"we don't like the current training."*

The Resolution

At the beginning of 2018, frustrated by employee apathy and limited by the constraints of a tedious training package, Jonathan was determined to find a training option that fit ICBF and Sheep Ireland's needs without exceeding the current budget laid out by the organisation. Resolute to reduce the time spent chasing up workers across ten different departments, Jonathan aimed to provide security awareness to the entire organisation without the added hassle.

For Jonathan, research for a new security training service began with the Gartner Magic Quadrant and KnowBe4 immediately stood out at the forefront of security awareness providers in both leadership and vision. There were several other contenders, but he recalled that it was "a hassle" trying to get into contact with a local reseller, as most of them had offices overseas, making it difficult to conduct business across different time zones. He found that being able to do business with a company on the same schedule was a luxury often taken for granted, particularly in the realm of IT security.

Once he decided to use KnowBe4, it was immediately implemented across ICBF and Sheep Ireland. After 18 months of employing KnowBe4's training services, Jonathan was full of praise: *"It's cheaper than our previous training provider and we're getting a hell of a lot more bang for our buck."* What stood out the most for Jonathan wasn't just Gartner's expert opinion, but also the glowing customer recommendations.

Implementation and Recommendations

Jonathan described the application of KnowBe4's security training simply as "frustration free." After logging into the KnowBe4 portal and downloading the Active Directory Integration tool, Jonathan recalled that *"about 30 seconds later, I had my entire list of users."* With a total of "five minutes work" from start to finish,

> *"I had my entire list of users and it was an hour's work later that I figured out what courses I wanted to give and set up a couple of courses for the next three months."*

"We implemented KnowBe4 throughout the organisation, training on a monthly basis," he said, following the complete execution of the tool. In addition to being cheaper than previous services, Jonathan noticed that KnowBe4 has "a much larger selection of user-friendly training material," while being "easy to monitor and set up," resulting in employees being visibly "more security-aware."

However, even user-friendly training sometimes needs a spoonful of sugar to go down. Erin Kennedy, part of the technical support team at HerdPlus, an additional subscription service of ICBF and Sheep Ireland, outlined the stages of accepting the training: *"initially it was probably an inconvenience, but the content is interesting and engaging, and it has made me more security-aware both in work and at home."*

Jonathan also appreciated the customer service provided by KnowBe4. They call regularly "offering help and assistance," to ask:

> *"Have you got any issues? Are you experiencing any problems? And I generally don't; but if you ask them a question, then they are excellent at bringing you up to speed quite quickly with everything. It's just great!"*

Jonathan noted that it isn't just a one-way street, either. *"They're always at the end of the phone and if you do need to ring them, they're brilliant,"* he said.

Results and Benefits

The results for ICBF and Sheep Ireland were simple, while it can be difficult to provide concrete metrics of success, the organisation noticed a "reduction of overall IT security threats". The KnowBe4 training at ICBF and Sheep Ireland "has equipped staff with the tools needed to acknowledge IT security threats inside and outside the organisation."

While it can be difficult to provide a definitive metric for successful security awareness, one simple way of proving success is by measuring staff engagement with the training. Since implementing KnowBe4, Jonathan noticed that IT security had become a topic amongst colleagues as their attitude towards cybersecurity evolved.

> *"Staff were having light-bulb moments when they see or hear of security threats. They feel enabled to analyse threats and empowered to make informed decisions when faced with a threat."*

Future Plans

Jonathan has a consistent vision for the future of security awareness training at the ICBF and Sheep Ireland. He has outlined that he is going to *"continue with the training to see if we can beat our industry phishing standard on a daily basis."*

When asked what he would do differently, Jonathan's response was straightforward:

> *"I'd go with KnowBe4 first. Any organisation that feels it needs security awareness training should talk to KnowBe4; don't look elsewhere."*