

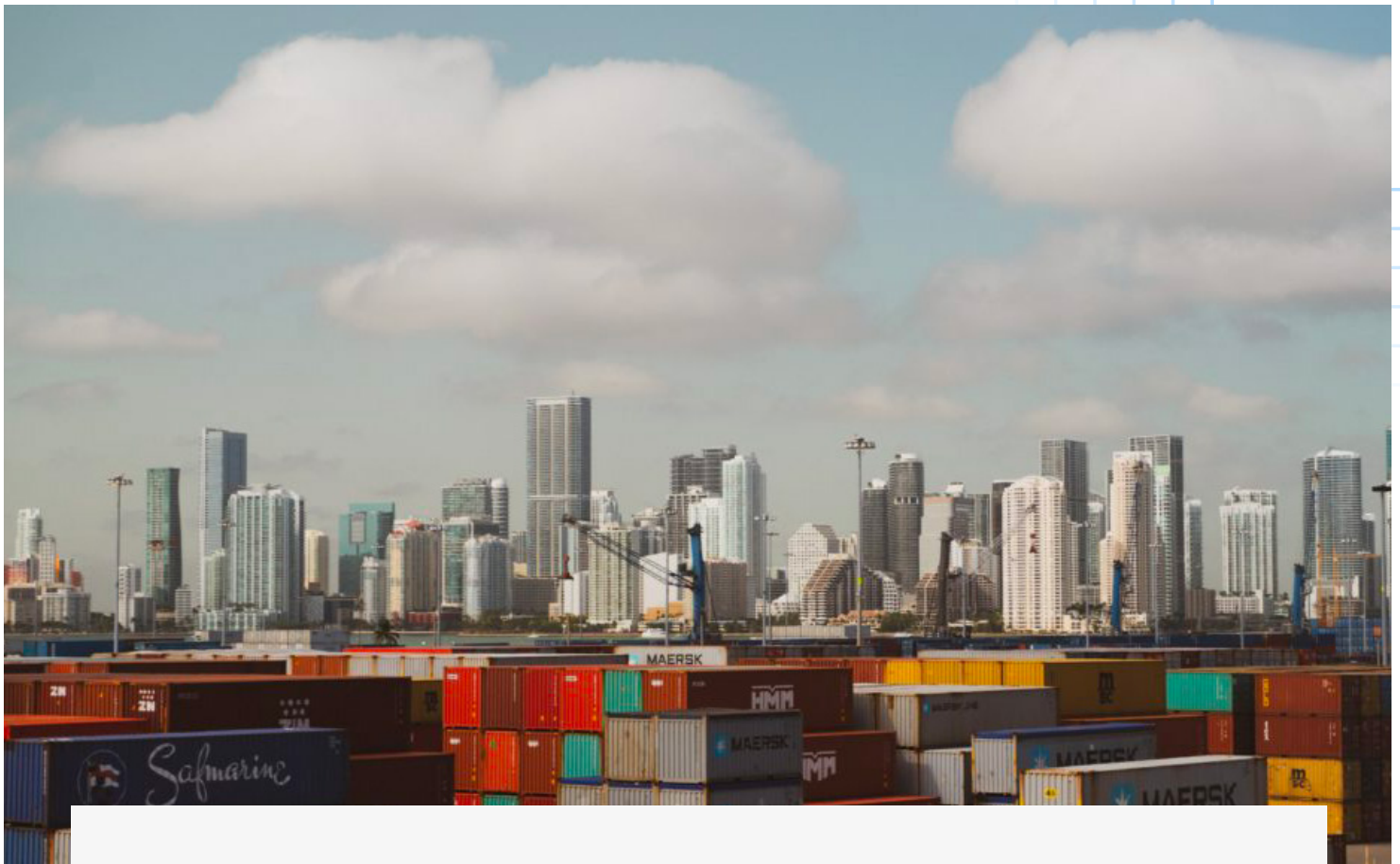


Driving Continuous Cybersecurity Improvement with Axio360

Moving Beyond Annual Assessments

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1. Introduction

The Case for a Comprehensive Platform to Manage Cyber Risk

As cyber events continue to increase in volume, frequency, and impact, protecting your organization must be a top priority. To optimize your company's preparedness to address cyber risks, you need industry guidelines to drive your cybersecurity program forward, using an assessment against guidelines as the baseline from which you can measure and grow. An assessment alone, however, is not enough.

Many organizations take assessments but don't take action on them. Too often, leaders have a negative perception of assessments based on past experiences of compliance audits that measure a snapshot in time based on prescriptive tests that often don't align well with their specific exposures, challenges, and risks.

A larger problem is that security leaders tend to be overloaded with managing responses to an already overwhelming volume of demands, including vulnerability announcements, threat alerts, questions from the board, budget fire drills, and technology approvals. Adding laborious assessments understandably invites cynicism.

There is a major opportunity to change the way assessments are conducted and how cybersecurity programs are managed. Instead of letting assessments be yet another item on your task list, make the assessment program work for you. Make the assessment process continuous—an integral part of your battle rhythm for cybersecurity. Make it the source of up-to-date data that you draw upon to answer questions. Make it your roadmap for cybersecurity program evolution. Make it your definitive source of truth about your position on that roadmap. Make it the source of your quarterly board update. Make it work for you.

Transforming our perception of and use of assessments requires more than a mind shift; it requires a change in our methodology and tools. Operating your assessment program on disconnected software like spreadsheets or GRC tools is not optimal. The challenges are well known: version control, access rights, setup complication, data aggregation, evidence annotation, three-color scale reporting, and so on.

A modern assessment program that works for you necessitates a comprehensive and current software platform that serves as the central resource for driving cybersecurity excellence—it must not only assess the current state but also declare the future state and support your actions to get there. It needs to be both a report card and a roadmap. The assessment must provide benchmarking data to help you answer, how do we compare to our peers? And it needs to provide a strong underpinning and connection to a current and actionable picture of the organization's cyber risk exposure.

Driving Continuous Cybersecurity Improvement with Axio360 is the first installment of an emerging property that outlines Axio's integrated methodology and platform for building an assessment program that works for you. Drawing upon our team members' decades of experience in the cybersecurity field, we share best practices and knowledge to position your assessment program for success.

We've witnessed firsthand the challenges our clients face with point-in-time assessments and static reports. As an answer to their pain points, we built an **integrated continuous and integrated risk management solution** for continuous assessment and planning with dynamic dashboards and integrated risk management capabilities. Axio360's intuitive interface enables users to realign strategies in order to address new considerations, without having to create an entirely new plan. Axio360 also integrates assessment insights with cyber risk quantification and insurance stress testing, allowing companies to develop, build, and continuously refine risk-based cybersecurity programs that focus on what's important now and in the future—an assessment program that works.



Currently, we organically support five of the 50 most commonly used frameworks: **C2M2, RC3, NIST CSF, COS-SA, and CIS20.**

2. Quick Launch Tool

Challenge: How to unify siloed organizational data to ensure optimized cyber posture?

The desire to share and take action on assessment insights should not be delayed by data bottlenecks. If information is prevented from flowing both upstream and downstream, it becomes trapped in a silo, unable to communicate with the enterprise—its people, processes, and technology.

Without the ability to integrate with compliance tools and ticketing systems, for example, knowledge gained from an assessment does not provide complete empowerment and improvement. These aforementioned systems often possess specialized knowledge that can guide how an assessment is completed, ensuring the data is current, and most importantly facilitate the visibility needed for decision makers to take action on control deficiencies gaps and other deficiencies.

How Axio Addresses the Challenge

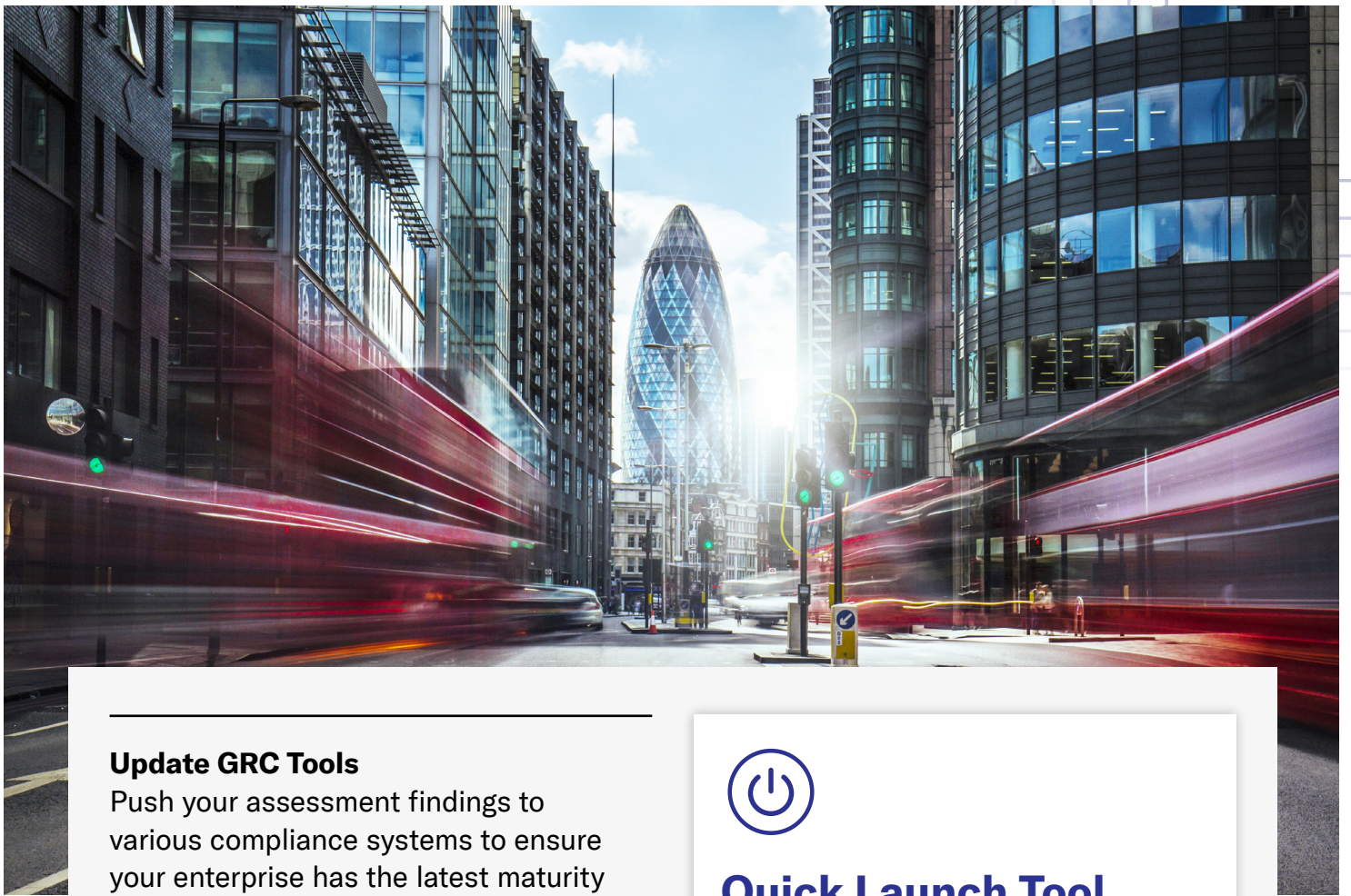
Axio360 has been architected from the ground up to provide a truly continuous assessment process. We support the following integration capabilities:

Ticketing Systems

Action items in Axio360 can be integrated with systems such as Zendesk and Jira. Decisionmakers can stay up to date on what control gaps and deficiencies require prioritization and communicate them to the appropriate stakeholders.

Answer Automation

Leverage external data sources such as Bitsight, Security Scorecard, and Fortify Data to accurately define maturity levels. You can also leverage internal data sources such as real-time metrics on patching efficiency to automatically update assessment questions to provide a real-time and dynamic view of the organization's posture.



Update GRC Tools

Push your assessment findings to various compliance systems to ensure your enterprise has the latest maturity understanding.

Single Pane of Glass View

Data from Axio360 can be pushed in real time to your Security Operations Center to complement other critical data from the organization.



Quick Launch Tool

If your organization is just getting started, our Quick Launch tool guides you through a 14-question assessment that takes 30 minutes to complete. It quickly outputs a dashboard and prioritizes recommendations. This is a great way to do a litmus test on where you are. When you're ready to conduct a more robust assessment, Axio360 can pre-populate your Quick Launch answers in your selected model so you can continue with your cybersecurity improvement journey.

3. Determining Current State

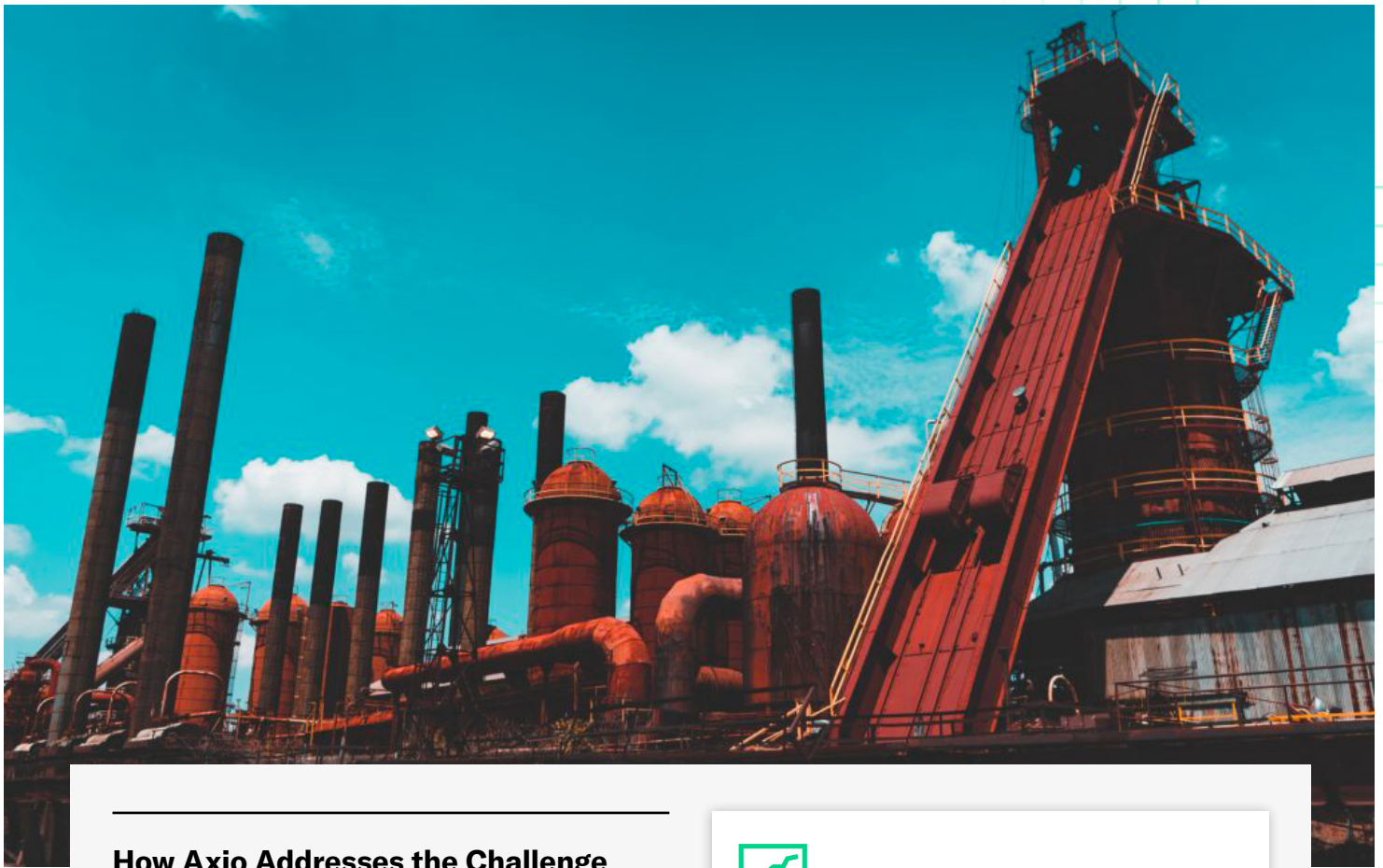
Challenge: What is the current state of my cybersecurity program?

It's critical to understand the current state of an organization's cyber posture. An annual assessment may satisfy your auditor or meet the minimum threshold of your cybersecurity policy requirements, but will it give you the confidence in your capabilities to keep your organization safe from cyber threats in the interim? Executive leadership should be asking: does cyber posture really remain static over the course of the year?

Axio recommends shifting your organizational philosophy toward a culture of continuous assessment and planning. Rather than a yearly review, assessments should be updated frequently and used as a key element of the cybersecurity planning process in order to effectively drive ongoing improvements and change. As a leader, you have the opportunity to leverage a continuous assessment process to drive a more responsive and less reactive posture—an approach that empowers you to know at any point in time what your program status is and how it has changed over the past month or quarter.

For most organizations, a single assessment does not provide enough granularity to achieve full visibility of the organization's cybersecurity posture.

For example: is cybersecurity in your manufacturing environment really the same as cybersecurity for your SOX-compliant financial system? Most likely, it differs. Continuous assessments can provide detailed visibility and plans across your enterprise.



How Axio Addresses the Challenge

With Axio's platform, leaders can begin an assessment quickly, simply, and independently. Our assessment is a one-stop shop for leaders to understand their current cybersecurity posture as a critical element of their risk exposure. Every assessment involves answering a series of questions about what and how activities are being performed in the organization. It is important to select a common assessment basis to enable visibility and drive improvement across the enterprise.



Axio360 Assessment Features

For any question asked in an assessment, you can capture notes, assign action items, and document evidence to help you reach your goals, giving you more value than a spreadsheet. Also, in addition to your current score, Axio360 enables you to select a target score and plan how to work towards that goal. Milestones and benchmarking help you compare your current state to previous ones, and to current states of other users of the platform. And Axio continues to add widgets to support our clients' needs.

While using Axio360 to conduct assessments, leaders answer questions and add notes to offer context. In addition, Axio360 helps to determine what business unit the question is addressing. Depending on the size of your company, it may be beneficial to conduct multiple assessments for different business units to ensure full coverage of your vulnerabilities.

With this process, stakeholders can come to a consensus on how to score themselves. The results are displayed on a dashboard with a visual snapshot and numerical data to illustrate results and patterns.

Additional dashboards summarize all assessments from across the organization and provide interfaces for developing and managing improvement roadmaps. In addition, reports are available for download and provide more detailed results and comparisons.

If your organization requires a custom solution, we can partner with you to develop it. You may need more than one instrument to get the job done. In addition, Axio's technology integration capability allows you to connect with various sources of data in your environment to deliver on our commitment to continuous assessment and instrumentation.

In order to continuously improve your cyber risk program, you need an intuitive tool that will allow you to assess your organization and take action. Axio's platform is a one-stop shop for leaders to assess their cybersecurity posture and encourage collaboration among units to determine the main risks.

4. Benchmarking Internally and Externally

Challenge: How do you compare within your organization and to your peers?

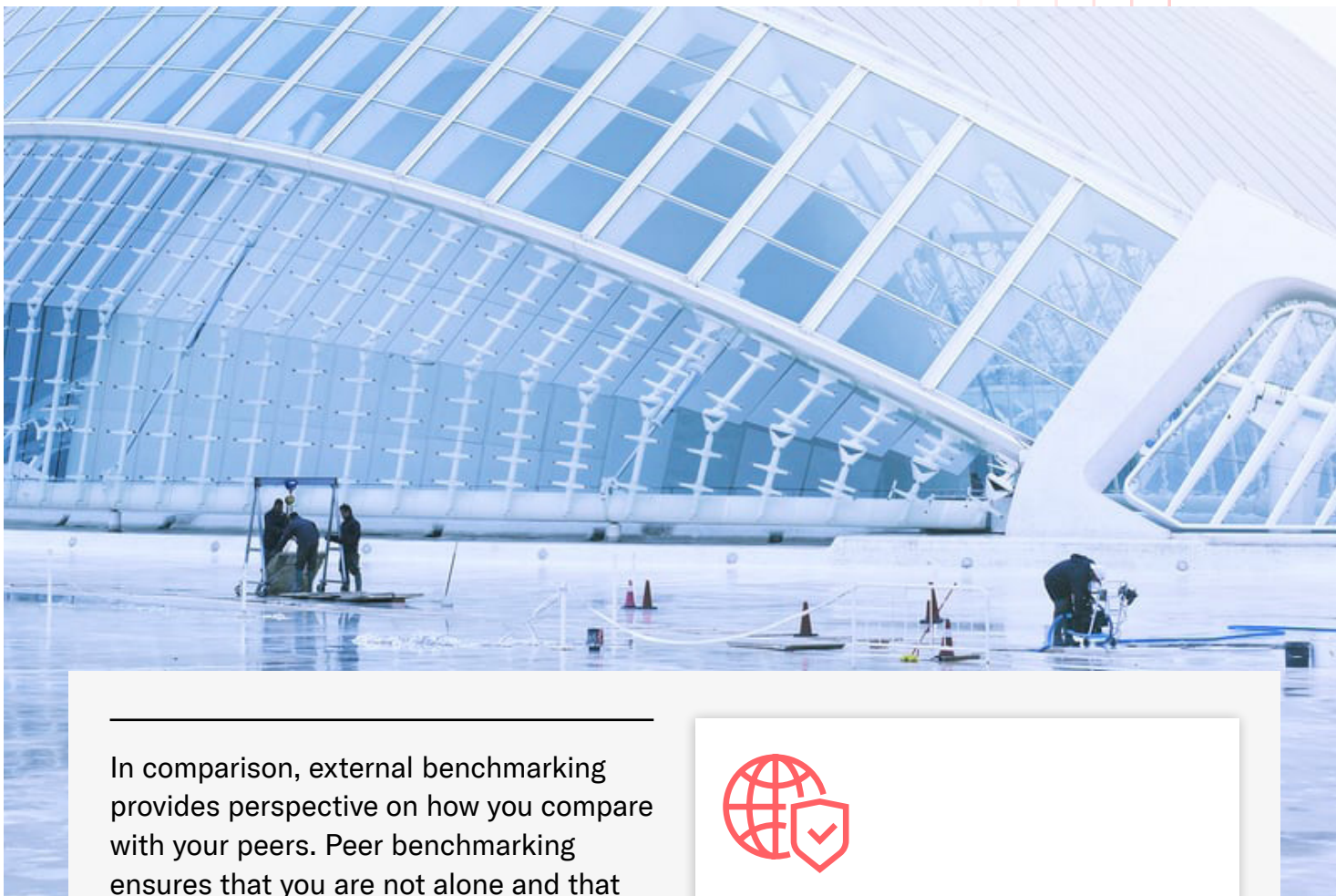
When evaluating your cybersecurity program, it is critical to benchmark internally and externally.

There are three major points on a cybersecurity journey: where you have been, where you are right now, and where you are planning to be.

It is a reasonable and common question to wonder how each of those points compare to different units within your organization and against your peers.

In particular, for large companies asking this question, benchmarking provides a window to peer into across all units. Being able to aggregate assessments across different units is a time saver. While you may have access to this data, the process of accumulating and comparing it is onerous.

Internal benchmarking is critical in formulating improvement and investment priorities to ensure that the areas of greatest need and highest risk are appropriately addressed. Visibility across a complex enterprise offers actionable insight to identify systemic weaknesses.



In comparison, external benchmarking provides perspective on how you compare with your peers. Peer benchmarking ensures that you are not alone and that you are evolving your program as the market matures. Information to answer this question is often hard to come by. Organizations are understandably keen to maintain data privacy. However, it is critical that organizations also have visibility into how far behind they are in their security measures. Axio360 has been designed to balance both concerns.



How Private Equity Firms use Axio360

Private equity firms use Axio360 to benchmark the cybersecurity posture of each of their portfolio companies and to gain an aggregate view of systemic gaps that need to be addressed. This enables them to demonstrate their fiduciary prudence to their investors and limited partners.

How **Axio** Addresses the Challenge

Benchmarking—both internally and externally—is a powerful tool for optimizing your program plan and investment. With this approach, you're able to evaluate key questions, such as Are we investing in the right places? and Are my peers prioritizing different aspects of their programs?

The Axio platform provides an aggregate dashboard that automatically calculates internal benchmarking data to compare the various parts of your organization. This helps you identify and prioritize improvements and investments across your enterprise and also helps you identify systemic improvements that if implemented centrally can elevate results across the enterprise.

In addition, Axio provides the means and data to compare your historical, current, and target scores to peer organizations. Our aggregated data from Axio360 provides the source of identity-protected benchmark data from across organizations. Dashboards present benchmarking at the top level of the assessment, and reports provide finer-grained benchmarking views for each section of the assessment instrument. Because we store the full history of your results, you can always look back at what your score was on any day since you created the assessment, which is valuable for reporting the progress of your program's evolution.

Furthermore, Axio strives to build a cybersecurity leadership community and can facilitate peer introduction upon request. We regularly facilitate workshops to offer additional support and introduce cyber leaders to each other, and we host regional gatherings where we bring multiple companies into the same room (after you've signed an NDA) to share best practices.

5. Roadmap for Improvements

Challenge: How do you develop an effective plan to evolve your cybersecurity program?

A successful cybersecurity program sustains the effective operation of the business while protecting it from cyber events. It offers a focused, actionable approach to addressing problem areas highlighted by assessments: a roadmap.

Powerful roadmaps are borne out of collaboration and reflect the latest stakeholder priorities. This is easier said than done. It is critical to have a strong process for evaluating competing considerations, from budgets to technological and operational feasibility. Furthermore, those considerations need to be risk scenario-weighted.

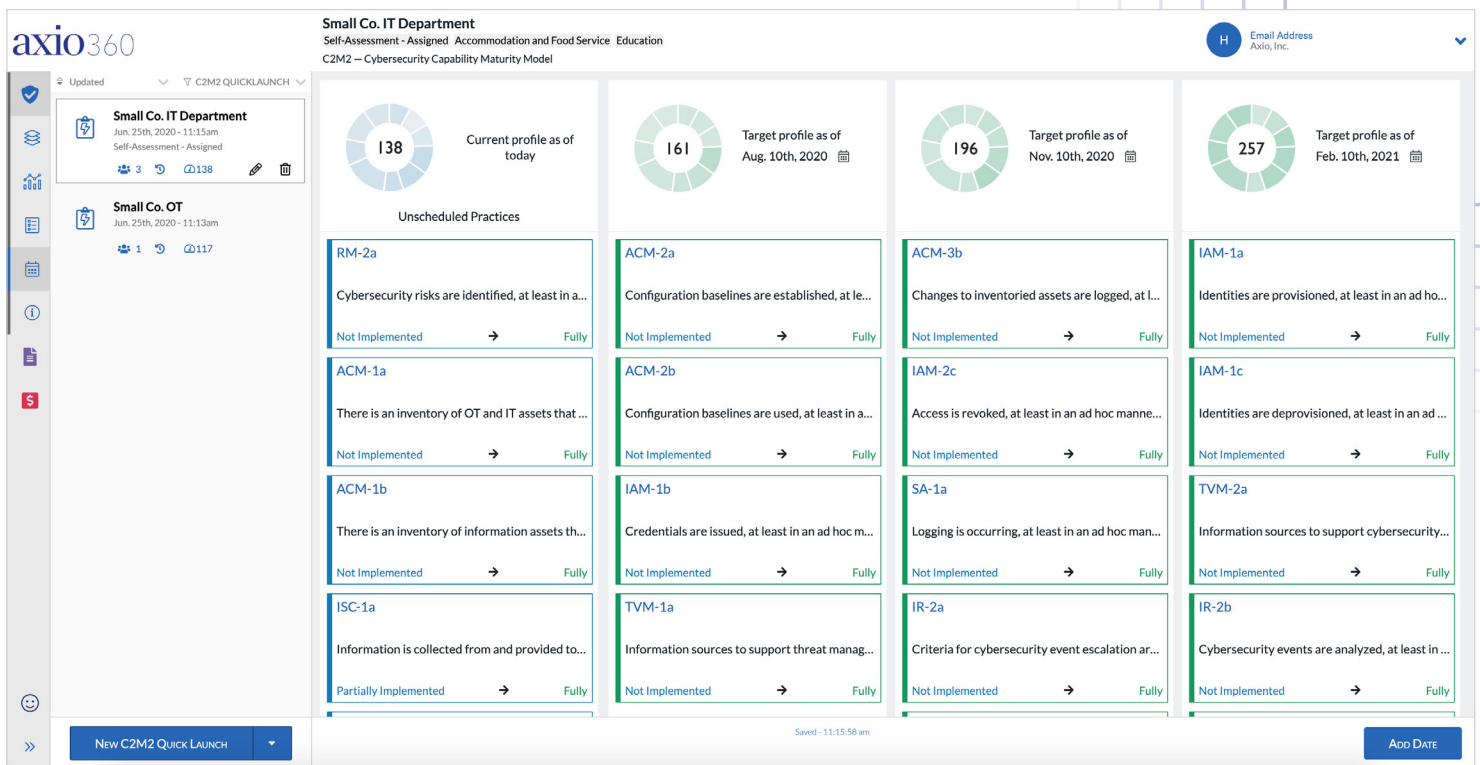
As priorities and the risk landscape evolve, even organizations that invest in roadmaps often find that they quickly become outdated.

Therefore, the challenge is technological in addition to being process-driven: current tools for roadmap development often do not allow for seamless collaboration or real-time updates. Organizations devote a lot of time managing disparate files, sharing permissions, and version control. There is appetite to shift the workload from process management to cybersecurity improvements.



Risk Weighting

To build that risk-weighted view of prioritization, organizations may start a risk management team within the cybersecurity department and then deploy it across the company. If you build an incident response system, you can include risk-weighting elements, such as what is considered an incident versus a crisis and at what level a supervisor or executive becomes involved.



How **Axio** Addresses the Challenge

Arming organizations with a centralized platform for managing assessments, Axio360 has a visual roadmap feature that enables users to nimbly sequence and prioritize cybersecurity improvements. This Kanban-board column interface makes adjusting plans as simple as dragging and dropping action items from one target date column to another. With actions items organized by milestones, the board intuitively helps organizations know what to focus on next.

Our platform also provides a real-time view of how your planning is progressing. You will see instant updates to your risk assessment score as you mark each action item as complete. This enables seamless collaboration, as users can co-work and make changes in real time. Our clients have found this handy when stewarding progress across multiple business units.

Assessment is just one element of Axio360. The cyber risk quantification module provides a compelling and actionable view of your cyber risk in financial terms, which supports prioritization for your roadmap. Having access to that view as part of the same platform enables you to make compelling risk-based improvement decisions. As your risk evolves, your plans can evolve in lockstep.

6. Case Study

IIoT Critical Infrastructure

One of our clients in the critical infrastructure space wanted to manage their cybersecurity in a holistic way. As a highly complicated organization with both information technology and operational technology functions, they needed a centralized dashboard and support system. Subject matter experts in various security domains were operating in silos and were not able to quickly share their knowledge for the necessary organizational improvement.

The IT and OT organizations were relying on cyber risk frameworks housed in spreadsheets they had to customize and constantly maintain. Attempting to update that collection of documents was time consuming and burdensome.

Axio360: More than a Cyber Health Checkup, a New Level of Fitness

In as little as two days our client was able to use Axio360 to complete a comprehensive cyber risk assessment with the C2M2 risk framework. By transitioning from a less granular framework, IT and OT leaders achieved a much deeper and more meaningful view of their program's maturity.

Key Benefits Achieved with Axio360

- Rapid cyber program maturity understanding across both IT and OT
- Real-time dynamic program roadmap builder
- Resulted in the launch of six prioritized projects needed to address the most pressing vulnerabilities.

7. Evaluating Progress

Challenge: How should leaders be measuring progress?

Evaluating progress—having a clear understanding of where you were, where you are, and where you want to be—is critical to making informed cybersecurity improvement decisions. A key component of evaluating progress is achieving consistent measurement and reporting that track improvements made over time. Documenting inputs and changes more frequently helps organizations focus their efforts on improving from the previous baseline without having to start from square one. This narrows the scope of work of conducting assessments and saves time, money, and resources.

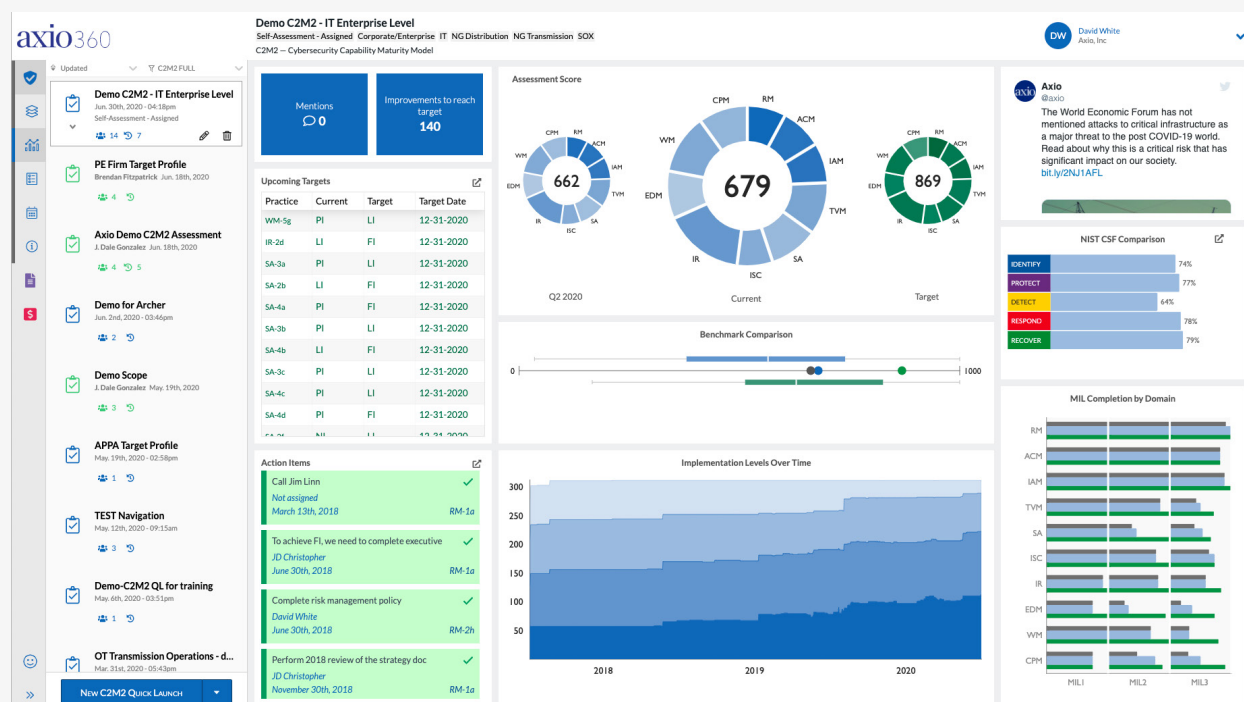
Depending on the platform you are using to track progress, however, it is not always a simple task to pick up from the last review. Often, organizations manage assessments across a series of disconnected tools and systems—from GRCs to spreadsheets. This drives inconsistencies, and managing improvements becomes a laborious, time-consuming process. Compounding the data management issue, many organizations conduct once-a-year assessments. Results quickly go stale; picking things up after a year has passed becomes a herculean task.

How Axio Addresses the Challenge

Axio360 offers an integrated system for collecting data, managing improvements, and evaluating progress. This relieves the laborious effort around reconciling inputs from disconnected sources. Our platform also scores your inputs against a standardized 1,000-point scale. This serves as a consistent ruler for your organization to measure against when reporting your progress to leadership periodically.

As you reach milestones and complete action items, the platform captures your journey of improvement in real time. In addition to seeing progress in specific functions, you will have a holistic view of your cybersecurity program evolution.

In addition to providing a longitudinal view, the platform enables users to dive into specific areas of weakness to diagnose problems. Your score is visualized within a wheel which highlights, by color gradient, strengths and weaknesses by function. You can easily focus on a specific function of deficiency and plan action items with milestones to add to your roadmap. The platform thus serves as an ever-evolving cyber program management tool—always up to date and relevant.



Axio360's dashboard provides a dynamic cybersecurity program planning experience

8. Targets

Challenge: How can organizations plan for the future of their cyber program?

A vital step in the journey to continuous improvement is setting targets. When assessing the current state, cyber leaders evaluate their gaps, from meeting compliance requirements or benchmarks to aspiring to become a center of excellence. It's impossible, however, for an organization to invest in every control. Teams have a limited amount of time, money, and resources and have to decide how to allocate them.

Because the scope of improvement can be expansive, it is useful to consider what is feasible to achieve, looking no more than 24 to 36 months ahead. The 24- to 36-month outlook helps frame what is realistic and reasonable. It also makes it easier to adjust targets as business priorities change. We've seen a lot of success with clients that thoroughly deliberate on each practice to set appropriate targets. This can be facilitated in a workshop setting where there is active discussion on budget constraints, technological and operational feasibility, and initiatives already in progress.

How Axio Addresses the Challenge

Axio360 makes it easy to set and adjust targets in a collaborative way. Users can set targets, practice by practice, as they are completing an assessment and can easily toggle between the current and target levels for visibility. As targets are being set, leaders can easily develop action items that would help in reaching those goals and assign them to team members right in the platform. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, Axio360 makes it easy for clients to re-evaluate their program and arrange their targets in a timeline that works for them with our previously mentioned roadmap tool.

Organizations can also set a target profile by completing an assessment reflecting a company-wide or even industry standard. Axio360 already comes with target profiles reflecting standards set by widely used frameworks like C2M2 and NERC CIP that you can apply to your assessment. In a large organization, leaders of each business unit can easily reference the company-wide requirements and apply the target profile to their assessments. Axio360 also allows clients to compare their targets with that of their peers to ensure that they are meeting peer standards.

9. Summary

Closing Thoughts. Empowerment comes from a comprehensive experience.

Organizations have become more reliant on technology, and this comes with more risk. Evaluating your cyber threat status frequently and on an ongoing basis empowers you to address these risks. Assessments help companies identify and evaluate these risks and to ultimately build business processes to tackle them.

The journey doesn't end with assessments however. You deserve a comprehensive platform that can combat cyberthreats holistically. The platform must not only provide a current state view but also help you understand how your internal business units compare against each other and how they stack externally against peers. The platform should also provide you a way to develop a roadmap for improvements, evaluate progress, and declare a future.

While conducting an Axio assessment, you'll experience an intuitive, user-friendly technology system that will lead you through the critical steps. Our platform provides a gap analysis of where you are and where you want to be with a visual Kanban board. Then we provide the recommendations for what to do, with reports and dashboards to track progress. If you require more guidance, Axio offers a preferred partner network with additional support. We also lead a professional services team with the expertise to focus on transformational projects.

**Beginning with your assessment,
Axio stays with you on your path
to cybersecurity continuous
improvement. Ready?**
[Let's get started!](#)

Notes

Demo

Watch a demo of Axio360 on axio.com/view-demo

Further Reading

[Building Data Driven Cyber Programs](#)

[Prioritizing Cybersecurity During Uncertain Times](#)

[Axio360 for Critical Infrastructure: A Conversation with AGA CIO Jim Lin](#)

[Quantification with Axio360: Talk Cyber Risk in Dollars and Cents Fact Sheet](#)