

2nd Act: U.S. Air Force Cyber Operations Officer to CEO Cyber MGA

Article by Maryanne Sherman | Published June 27, 2023 on CarrierManagement.com

Vishaal Hariprasad, the chief executive and co-founder of a managing general agency specializing in cyber risk solutions, is known by the nickname “V8,” a nickname he got during his days in the Air Force. It was in the Air Force that he also learned that cyber risk defense needs to begin with an understanding of offensive minds—a key idea he applied to the MGA operation.

Among the first class to enter the U.S. Air Force Academy after 9/11, V8 graduated with a degree in math and became a communications officer, focusing on large scale enterprise communications for military-use cases. His first assignment was in South Korea at an Army base.

He eventually transferred to an Air Force base where units stood ready to assist if a conflict should arise overnight on the Korean Peninsula.

After a few years in Korea, V8 was re-assigned to Fort Meade which houses the headquarters of the National Security Agency (NSA). “In Korea, I realized how important communication connections were to making a mission happen and succeed. I got to understand how that connective tissue on the backend works for IT and communications. When I came to the NSA, without going into

too many details, I was involved with cybersecurity and cyber warfare. What stood

Executive Summary

This article is part of a three-part series on P/C insurance executives whose careers in the industry are “second act” careers. Here, Resilience Co-Founder Vishaal “V8” Hariprasad explains why his career journey to a role applying an insurance mindset to cybersecurity isn’t “officially a second act.”

“Our job is to figure out how to shape the future of the digital world,” he says, explaining why he and “other cyber nerds” are working in insurance today.

Part 3 of a Series



out for me was the complexity of cyber from a technological standpoint and what that enables—e.g., business and military operations, whatever they might be. Today, we’re seeing digital and information become a key component of warfare.”

Before leaving active service in 2012, V8 segued into the next step in his journey. He met with the director of the NSA and Commander of U.S. Cyber Command, General Keith Alexander, when he visited one of the deployed

team’s V8 was leading in Iraq. General Alexander wanted to learn more about why the operations were working so well. V8 told him that their job was to “help good people do good things and protect them from the bad guys.” General Alexander gave V8 a letter of recommendation to work on a PhD in math after leaving the Air Force.

V8 entered active reserves and was planning to get his PhD and come back to work at the NSA. Instead, he fortuitously met his co-founder

for his first business, Raj Shah. “We were both Air Force reservists at that time and we talked about starting a company to help businesses defend themselves against cyber risks. We built software and a security software product [Morta Security] for the global 500 CISOs and sold it two years later to Palo Alto Networks. Today, that company is one of the largest cybersecurity platforms globally for large-scale enterprises,” he said, noting that through that experience, he began to see how cybersecurity works “at a business and enterprise level.

At Fort Meade, V8 said he saw how the bad guys (adversaries) conduct both offensive and defensive missions specifically around critical infrastructure. “This was the genesis of my awareness of how three domains interact,” he said, referring to:

The red space of the enemies, bad guys, criminals, and simply folks doing the wrong things.

The gray space where IT systems connect all of us and our businesses globally.

The blue space, which is

the defensive area where our businesses and personal lives reside.

“I was a highly effective defender because I understood how offensive minds think and operate. I think that’s true about security practitioners outside of the military as well. Being good at offense makes you good at defense. That’s what brought me to this idea for starting up cyber MGA Resilience. I thought we needed to shift our mindset from just thinking about defense and IT to addressing the human dynamic in cyber risks—because behind every cyber operation, there’s a human.”

In 2016, V8 spent a lot of time understanding what makes the insurance industry tick and how he could best utilize its strength to drive better security decisions and actions. “I thought the real opportunity was all about risk decision-making. How do we help people on the defensive side? How do we help quantify and understand what we’re up against, not on an annual basis, but on a regular recurring basis? And then most

importantly, how do we take the right actions, essentially aligning the incentives.”

Cyber risk professionals originally focused on liability issues around data breaches and the need for password protection. This is vastly different from what is happening now, two decades later—when a broader property/casualty mindset recognizes IT outages or cyber vulnerabilities as issues in world where most business and personal activities are dependent on cyber. “My passion and drive are to help businesses and consumers stay ahead of opportunistic criminal actors. It’s not about breaches and passwords. It’s about the P/C trigger-based world keeping ahead of a dynamic, human-caused risk.”

Commenting on his inclusion in this series of Carrier Management articles on professionals with “second act” careers, V8 said, “I don’t view my career change as leaving security to join insurance.” Instead, he said he is “bringing the insurance and risk management mindset, history, and paradigm” to cyber



“I thought we needed to shift our mindset from just thinking about defense and IT to addressing the human dynamic in cyber risks—because behind every cyber operation, there’s a human.”

“risk quantification, prioritization, and risk transfer.”

“My journey is not officially a ‘second act,’” he said.

Still, like a lot of people who come to insurance for the first time, there are aspects of the industry’s purpose that he didn’t grasp from the outside. “All I knew about insurance was healthcare and auto insurance. I didn’t appreciate how insurance shapes behaviors at a very fundamental level. It doesn’t do it directly; it does it in a manner that drives the right conversations

at the levels that matter. This is why I am in insurance and why a bunch of cyber nerds are in insurance today. Our job is to figure out how to shape the future of the digital world.”

What about that nickname?

Hariprasad shared the origin of the V8 moniker, recounting his early days in Korea.

“In the military, if you have a non-standard name or one that is especially long, they abbreviate it to the first letter. So, they took the V from my first name and added a 7 after it based on the number of letters in my first name.”

That’s not quite the whole story, since he’s now known as V8, not V7.

Supplying the missing details, Hariprasad recalled: “When I first arrived in Korea, they had me doing a lot of paperwork, which wasn’t much fun. The commander visited our area a few weeks later and saw the stack of paper on my desk. His first question was where is that new lieutenant?”

“They found me in the motor pool working on a Humvee engine. He asked why I was there, and I said, ‘Sir, this is much more interesting to me.’”

“The commander asked if I was a ‘hardhead,’” and Hariprasad replied that he was.

“They decided to upgrade me to ‘V8’ because I was ‘hardheaded’ enough to power through and make things happen,” he said. “In the end, it turned out to be a great nickname”—except maybe for one point of confusion.

“For the record, I do not like Bloody Marys,” he said, referring to the fact that V8, a vegetable juice, is sometimes included in recipes for the cocktail.

Hear more from V8 in [Episode 1 of the new ‘No Exclusions’ podcast](#) on IJTV, hosted by Insurance Journal’s National Editor Chad Hemenway



Maryanne Sherman, Sherman Think Tank

Maryanne Sherman is President of Sherman Think Tank, a marketing communications “think tank” specializing in the insurance and reinsurance industry based in Lawrenceville, N.J. She is a veteran writer with decades of experience writing about insurance and a past president of the Association of Professional Insurance Women. Reach her at msherman@shermanthinktank.com.