

OWASP 2012 Board Interviews – Jim Manico

Adam: What are your most notable accomplishments over the past 3 years as an OWASP contributor?

Jim: Adam I really think it's important that when we're working on OWASP projects that we don't just dump a project but that we maintain it over time and I think that's kind of like symbolic for a lot of the work I've been doing at OWASP as a volunteer. There's the OWASP podcast series. I'm editing today podcast number 93 and this has been a labour of love of mine since 2008. I both created and I'm the founder, I'm the producer and I'm the host of the OWASP podcast series which is a show that features all the great work throughout OWASP. So it's not just me, it's the many members and experts in OWASP who come on the show to talk about our mission and it's something that demonstrates maintenance of a project over time. I'm editing my 93rd show today for the community and hopefully it demonstrates I'm not just going to dump a project and I'm going to hang with it for the long haul.

I've also been working on the OWASP cheat sheet series. This is a developer centric guide but instead of deploying a 300 page guide, we've deployed several small 1 – 3 page guides that we maintain over time and always keep them up to date on small individual topics within defensive coding, like query parameterization cheat sheet, and SQL injection cheat sheet and cross-site scripting defense cheat sheets. And again we're individually maintaining all of these individual cheat sheets over time to always provide up to date information to that series. I've also been a nasapy contributor. I've thrown down code and helped maintain the project during the early phases and passed that off to Chris Schmidt and to Kevin Wall. And I'm currently managing 2 projects the java encoder and the HTML sanitizer. The java encoder was written by a PhD candidate Jeff Ikinowski. The HTML sanitizer for java is written and maintained by Mike Samuel from Google, and these are really high end PhD level programmers writing individual modules to help solve a specific security project. And I went out and I recruited these gentlemen, knowing their expertise and asked them to build these stand alone modules for us for application defense.

I've also been the chair of the OWASP connections committee – that's marketing and evangelism. It's not a big committee so to speak, but it's maintenance over time. I create the OWASP blog and keep posting to it. I tweet for OWASP in a vendor neutral, hopefully high integrity way but representing the OWASP values and just do my best to get the message of what's happening at OWASP throughout the community as best I can. I also do a lot of recruiting. I brought in quite a few other developers and security professionals and I dragged them into OWASP. For example, the OWASP mobile project – I lured several of the leaders in and encouraged them to volunteer and donate their time and content to the OWASP foundation and I'm really proud of all the work that Jack, Benino and others in the mobile project have done. And last, I've had the honour of travelling all over the world internationally speaking at different OWASP chapters providing vendor neutral free training and talks on defensive coding trying to contribute to OWASP chapters worldwide. These are some of the things I've been doing the last 3 years and on top of all that I'm just really enthusiastic about OWASP. I find myself speaking for the foundation in a variety of different ways, through the connections committee and it's just my personal passion, it's what I would do regardless in my free time.

Adam: What are the most significant challenges OWASP is facing?

Jim: I think one of the big ones is financial. I mean the economy is not so great and it requires dollars and cents to run our organisation, especially when it comes to keeping basic services running like keeping our wiki running and keeping our different IT services running for the community. That takes people, that takes expertise and I think as the economy changes and finances become harder to absorb in the organisation, it's becoming more difficult to run basic services as we've lost some of those resources. So I think getting a much more professional support around the basic IT services that run the company is one of our main challenges. And there's a lot of work being done on that right now. This is not something that needs to be started from scratch. There's already major efforts in the board right now working to fix that problem. I also think vendor neutrality is a big problem in OWASP as well. I talked about this quite a bit in that as OWASP gets bigger, as OWASP becomes more important in the industry, we have to work harder to maintain an objective vendor neutral stance. If too many of us as a community use OWASP to sell some product it hurts the whole community, it hurts our mission so it's something I want to keep fighting for to maintain that vendor neutral stance, not just in myself but as a core ethics across all of OWASP leadership.

Adam: If you are elected, what would the top 3 things be that you would focus upon?

Jim: I think number one I would focus on fund raising and I think it's critical for any board member of a non profit organisation to focus on fund raising, it keeps the lifeblood of our organisation running and I want to do so in a way that is still commiserate with OWASP ethics and still represents the brand in a good and positive way. So that's one of the main things I would do. The 2nd thing is continue to assist an expanding membership, especially among the developer community and I think we can improve on expanding developer membership within the organisation and it will also have a great impact in terms of serving our mission and I think that outreach and developers were constantly doing it, were doing a good job of it and I want to do more of it as an organisation and as a board member I'd be able to spearhead doing that even more on an organisational level. And last content reorganisation. We have some incredible content in OWASP. We also have some of the messiest content, disorganised content and I'd really like to help spearhead initiatives where we were not just increasing the quality of our current content but removing all content that's not pertinent or is out of date to make OWASP more consumable. Again our mission is to spread awareness and I think if we continue to reorganise our content, continue to make OWASP wiki and website more consumable, it just helps us spread our mission more. And these are 3 of the main things that I would focus on if I was granted membership in the board.

Adam: What do you want to do as a board member that you can't do as an OWASP leader or a committee member?

Jim: Adam, as a board member I'd have a lot more opportunity to serve as an ambassador for the organisation. So again our mission is awareness and it would give me more of an opportunity to speak for OWASP to spread the mission of the risk associated with web application security, to spread the evangelism of secure coding practices. It's what I already do now as a committee member and as a volunteer for OWASP, but as a board member there would be more chances to be that ambassador. I feel that if you go back and look at how I've served OWASP, I have worked hard to maintain a vendor neutral stance when representing the organisation. And as I become a board member, it's even more important to maintain that objective vendor neutral stance. Our job as OWASP leaders, as OWASP board members is to put the good of the community, put

the good of the mission, put the good of OWASP ahead of our own interests and I really want to continue doing that as a board member.

Adam: And finally, how does your past experience relate to this position?

Jim: I think probably one of the more important aspects of what I've done in the last couple of years is I've had a lot of international travel. I've had the honour of speaking at over 30 plus OWASP chapters through much of Europe and the United States and I've always approached speaking at these chapters by providing open information, by providing "hey can we have a copy of your slides?" "Of course", making everything I do available, make it open source and keep it in a vendor neutral way where I'm trying to add value not sell product or sell an idea, just provide free information. And the fact that I've had that international experience, it gives me the perspective of OWASP members all over the world so I can get different perspectives. OWASP is a global organisation and I hope to bring a global perspective to the board. The other key thing is I go and give talks more and more so I'm giving free training. I've offered at OFSAC USA just to provide 2 half day seminars on secure coding just as a courtesy to the community and I'm trying to do that more and more – free seminars, free talks, open source information, vendor neutral around web security coding. And I think that's the core of what we want to do at OWASP is spread awareness about this huge risk of web security and I've been working hard the last couple of years to do that in a hopefully high integrity vendor neutral way.