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From Confused to Certified: Your Strategic Cyber Roadmap 2025

A SECURE | CYBER CONNECT Guide by Warren Atkinson & Jay Adamson



CYBER CONNECT
COMMUNITY



CYBER CONNECT
PODCAST



AI INNOVATION &
TRANSFORMATION



LEADERSHIP &
CONSULTING



OFFENSIVE
SECURITY



DEFENSIVE
SECURITY



GRC &
CULTURE

STOP DROWNING IN ACRONYM SOUP

We're constantly asked: "Where do I start in Cybersecurity?" "Which Certs actually matter?" "Is Cyber still worth it?"

Fair questions. Because right now, the Industry feels like a mix of Burnout, Gatekeeping, and Acronym Soup. But it's also full of Resilience, Ambition, and a New Wave of Talent ready to Break In and Break Through.

Let's be clear: Altitude and Attitude often outshine Certifications. But we also respect the Confidence a Cert can bring – especially if you're forging your Path in Tech without a Traditional Background.

This Roadmap is designed to help you Navigate the Chaos, Focus your Energy, and Build a Career with Real Influence, Income, and Impact.

YOUR THREE-TIER CERTIFICATION STRATEGY

TIER 1: BREAKING IN (ENTRY-LEVEL FOUNDATION)

Start Smart, Build Confidence, Prove Your Worth

Essential First Steps:

- **CompTIA Security+** → Core Cybersecurity Concepts to pass Basic Security Challenges
- **(ISC)² Certified in Cybersecurity** → Entry-Level Recognition from a Global Authority
- **Google Cybersecurity Certificate** → Hands-On Labs for Real-World Problem Solving
- **CompTIA Network+** → Networking Fundamentals Critical to Security Roles
- **CompTIA CySA+** → Practical Threat Detection Skills

Hands-On Boost Options:

- **CEH** → Intro to Ethical Hacking and Penetration Testing
- **Microsoft Security Fundamentals** → Security in Enterprise Environments
- **AWS Cloud Practitioner** → Basics of Cloud Security
- **Hack The Box CJCA** → Practical, Scenario-Based Cyber Labs

SECURE Insider Tip:

Pick ONE or TWO to start, Build Small Projects, and Showcase Hands-On Skills. Employers notice Proof, not just Theory.

Free Resources to Start Today:

- Download Cisco Packet Tracer and Build your First Virtual Network
- TryHackMe's "Pre-Security" Path is Free and Beginner-Friendly
- Splunk Fundamentals 1 → Start Hunting Threats like a Pro

TIER 2: LEVELLING UP (ADVANCED TECHNICAL MASTERY)

Prove Mastery, Lead Projects, Secure Enterprise Systems

Strategic Leadership Track:

- **CISSP** → Security Strategy and Risk Management Mastery
- **CISM** → Lead and Govern Security Programs
- **CISA** → Audit, Control, and Ensure Compliance in IT Systems
- **CCSP** → Secure Cloud Architecture and Operations
- **CRISC** → Manage Enterprise IT Risk with Confidence

Hands-On Defence & Attack Track:

- **AWS Security Specialty** → Deep Cloud Security Expertise
- **OSCP** → Hands-On Ethical Hacking Credibility
- **Hack The Box CPTe** → Real-World Penetration Testing Scenarios
- **GSEC** → Solid Grounding in Essential Security Practices
- **CompTIA Pentest+** → Practical Penetration Testing Skills

SECURE Insider Tip:

Combine Advanced Certs with Labs or a Portfolio of Projects. You're demonstrating Real, Applied Expertise that Hiring Managers can't ignore.

Free Resources to Advance:

- Use AWS Free Tier to explore IAM and S3 Permissions
- OWASP Juice Shop for Secure Coding Practice
- CISA ICS Cybersecurity Training → Free and Foundational



TIER 3: LEADING IMPACT (STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP)

Not Just Tech, But Business Impact and Strategic Influence

Executive Leadership Essentials:

- **CCISO** → Executive-Level Security Leadership Skills
- **CGEIT** → Governance of Enterprise IT to Drive Business Outcomes
- **CIPP** → Privacy Regulations Expertise for Global Compliance

Strategic Enhancement:

- **Cybersecurity Strategy Workshops** → Real-World Scenarios and Executive Decisions
- **Resilience & Governance Programs** → Wellbeing, Operational Resilience, Leadership Impact
- **OSCP/CPTE Awareness** → Understand Practical Offensive Security (even if you don't execute)

SECURE Insider Tip:

Leadership in Cybersecurity blends Technical Knowledge with Governance, Strategy, and People Skills. These Resources give you a Holistic Edge that separates true Leaders from Technical Specialists.

Free Strategic Resources:

- Read NIST Cybersecurity Framework (Free PDF)
- Download Free ISO Templates from IT Governance UK
- TED Talks on Behavioural Security → Eye-Opening and Free

THE SECURE STRATEGIC APPROACH: BEYOND CERTIFICATIONS

YOUR 2025 FOCUS AREAS SHOULD INCLUDE:

AI-Powered Cybersecurity

- Databricks AI Security, SANS SEC595, ISO/IEC 42001
- Free Start: Use Databricks Guide to explore AI in Cyber Defence

DevSecOps & Secure Development

- ISC2 CSSLP, SANS DEV522, Microsoft AZ-400
- Free Start: OWASP Juice Shop for Secure Coding Practice

Human Factors & Cyber Psychology

- CSAP, SANS MGT433, Cranfield Cyber Psychology
- Free Start: Explore Behavioural Security TED Talks

IoT & OT Security

- GIAC GICSP, SANS ICS410, CompTIA SecOT+
- Free Start: CISA ICS Cybersecurity Training

»» YOUR NEXT STEPS: FROM CONFUSED TO CONFIDENT

Week 1: Assess & Choose

- Review the Three Tiers above
- Choose ONE Certification aligned with your Current Level and Career Goals
- Download ONE Free Resource and start Learning

Week 2: Plan & Prepare

- Set a Realistic Timeline (3-6 months for most Certs)
- Join SECURE | CYBER CONNECT Community for Support and Networking
- Start Building a Project Portfolio alongside your Studies

Week 3: Execute & Connect

- Begin Structured Learning
- Attend Weekly Online Networking Sessions
- Connect with Mentors through our Mutual Mentoring Programme

»» THE SECURE DIFFERENCE: COMMUNITY OVER COMPETITION

We believe Cybersecurity thrives when we Share Knowledge, Break Down Barriers, and Elevate Diverse Voices. That's why every Certification Journey should include:

- **Mentorship** → Learn from those who've walked the Path
- **Community** → Connect with Peers facing similar Challenges
- **Purpose** → Use your Skills to Build a more Secure, Inclusive Digital World



READY TO TRANSFORM FROM CONFUSED TO CERTIFIED?

Join 3,500+ Professionals in the SECURE | CYBER CONNECT Community. Access Free Resources, Weekly Networking, Mutual Mentoring, and connect with Cyber Leaders who are shaping the Future of our Industry.

This Guide represents our Commitment to making Cybersecurity Education more Inclusive and Accessible. We need your Help → Let's work together to break down Barriers and build Bridges in Cyber.

- **SECURE | CYBER CONNECT Platform & App**
- **Weekly Online Networking Sessions**
- **Cross-Sector Mutual Mentoring Programme**
- **CYBER CONNECT Podcast (Episodes 1-70+)**

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