# Gabriel CONSULTING GROUP

2011 Data Center Security Survey: Effectiveness

The recent spate of security breaches and data theft is making data center security a hot topic not only in the executive suite, but also around the dinner table as personal data from highly trafficked gaming and social networking sites has been pilfered.

In our **2011 Data Center Security Survey**, we ask data center personnel a wide range of questions about how their organizations deal with IT and data center security. This survey had 147 highly qualified respondents from organizations of varying sizes (full demographics available here).

In this segment of results, "Effectiveness," we're looking at how our real-world respondents assessed the current state of their IT security. Do they believe it's strong, and that they're well protected from the ever-rising number of threats? Does their management have an accurate idea of their security risk? Is the organization taking security seriously and devoting enough resources toward ensuring that their data is well protected?


"Our IT security is stronger now than ever before..."
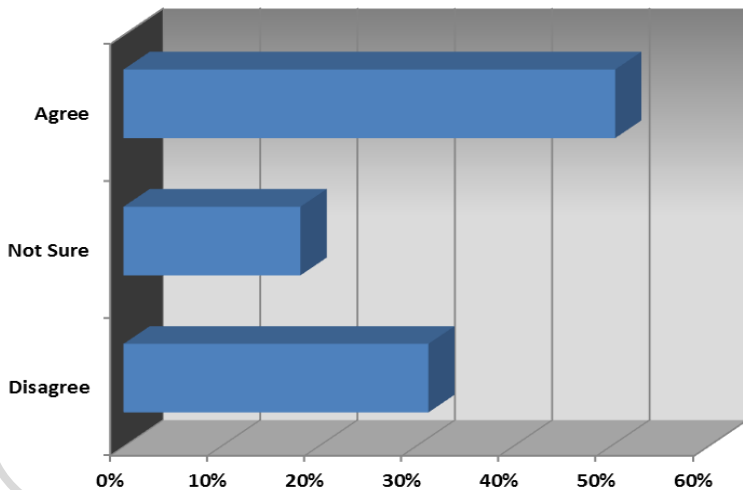
Half of our respondents say that their security is stronger now than ever before – which is certainly a good thing, considering that there are more threats out there than ever before.

But what about the other half? The respondents who either disagreed or weren't sure that their security is stronger now? This is cause for concern, and something that upper management needs to know about.

"Our security isn't keeping pace with threats..."
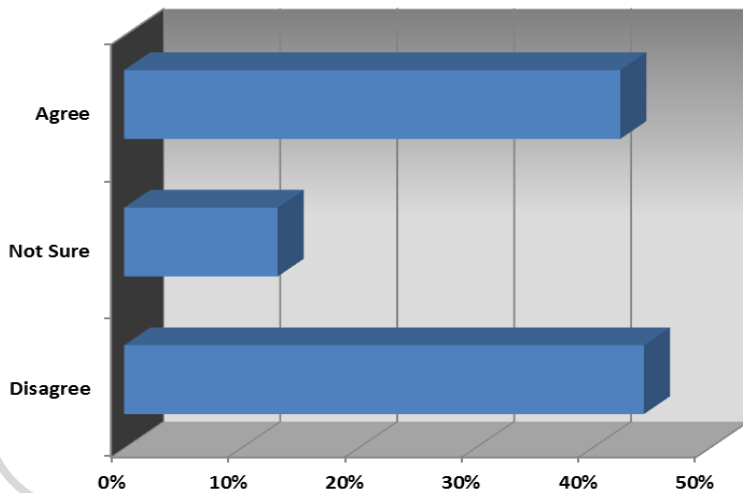
42% of respondents explicitly say that their security isn't keeping up with the ever-growing number of threats to their data and networks. A bare majority (44%) assert that their security is doing a good job of keeping the bad guys at bay.

**"We're constantly finding new holes in our IT security..."**
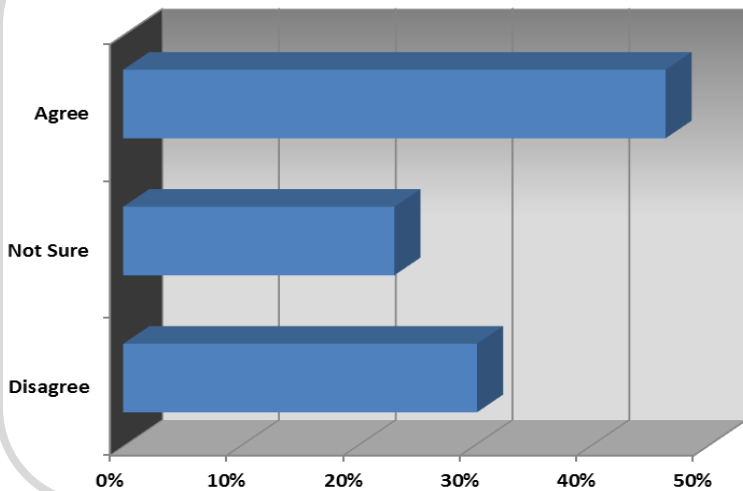
Almost half say that they're constantly finding security holes, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Security is being probed all the time, and the bad guys are busy pioneering new weaknesses to exploit.

However, if this is truly a "constant" thing, it could be a sign of other problems. For example: security products that aren't comprehensive enough or that don't update. Or users who let in too many outside exploits. Or even IT staff who open up too many "just for a second" security doors without properly (or promptly) closing them down.

This next result is one of the most significant in the entire survey. It probably won't surprise anyone who has worked in IT for any period of time, but it could be a bit of a shock to business-side and upper IT management types.
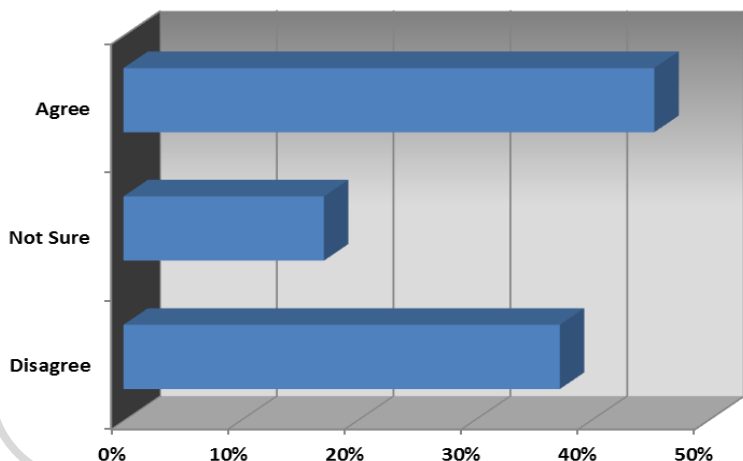
"Management believes our systems are more security than they really are..."
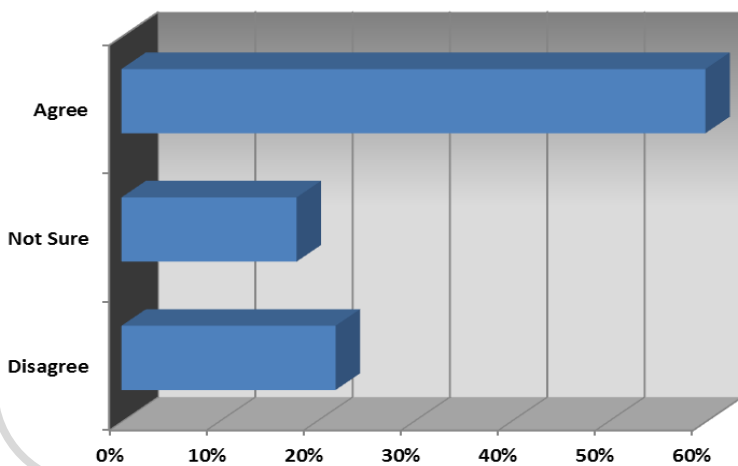
Fully 60% say that their management thinks the enterprise is more secure than it really is. Only 22% say that management knows their true security (or insecurity) status.

This is indicative of poor communications between IT staff and management – which isn't unprecedented, of course. But since security is so important, it's crucial that upper management understands the risks and potential consequences of lax or unsophisticated security.

"Our company devotes enough attention and resources to IT security..."

Agree	
Not Sure	
Disagree	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%

Respondents are split on whether IT security receives enough attention and investment in their organizations; 45% say it does, but 37% disagree.

Given that 60% say that their management believes they are more secure than they truly are (previous question), it's probably a good idea to schedule a meeting to cover that fact with management. A second major agenda item for that meeting should be this: "Are we devoting enough attention and resources to data center security?" In many cases, the answer will be a firm and clear "No."

"Overall, we do a pretty good job on IT security..."

Agree	
Not Sure	
Disagree	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
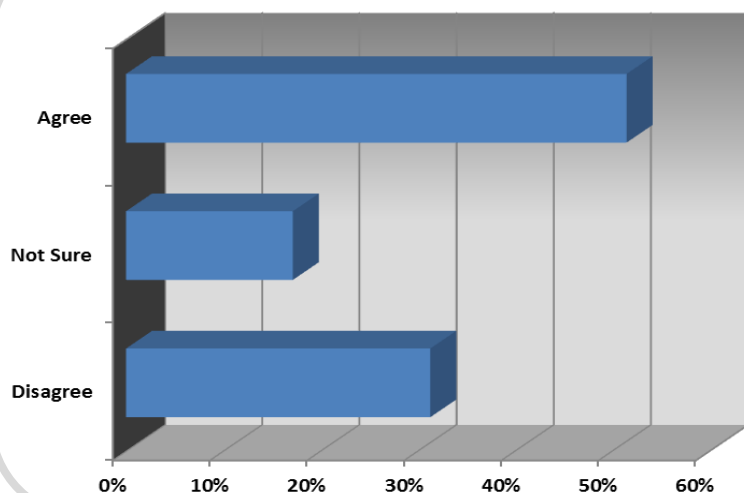
Roughly one-third, 32%, flat-out state that their organizations aren't doing a good job on enterprise IT security. Almost 20% say that they're not so sure. This leaves barely half (52%) who believe that their organizations are handling IT security at least adequately.

While most professionals are usually their own worst critics, the fact that only half have confidence in their security measures is disquieting.

It's quite an eye-opener to see how poorly these seasoned and knowledgeable data center folks rate their data center security efforts. For many firms, their data is their life blood, and keeping it secure should be at the top of any 'to do' list. But this requires real attention and investment – not just lip service. In our next report, we take a look at the security implications of virtualization and cloud computing. You can find that report here…

If you're interested in finding out more about this survey and seeing more results (demographics, expanded results, detailed GCG analysis), click here.

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