Taking Action: Making a Plan for Successful Automated Governance

Governance is the backbone of any compliance program, and automating your governance efforts will help your organization achieve continuous, flexible, and highly efficient oversight to keep up with changing regulatory requirements and ever-shifting threat landscapes.

Here is a step-by-step roadmap to help you modernize your governance program:

STEP 01

Assess the Governance Landscape

First, identify where you are today. Start by taking an inventory of frameworks and policies and pinpoint exactly where evidence currently lives within your organization. (For example, in many organizations, it's scattered across multiple logs, spreadsheets, and tickets.) Then, determine which manual processes are causing the biggest bottlenecks for your teams.

STEP 02

Standardize Your Taxonomies

Once you have a thorough understanding of your existing governance efforts, the next step is to align all teams on how you will define risks, controls, and evidence, so your automations have a reliable basis for execution. Build a standardized control library that clearly defines frequency, ownership, and what constitutes proof for each control.

STEP 03

Select the Right Platform

Now it's time to choose your security and compliance automation platform. As you compare options, be sure to look for a solution that offers deep integrations with the systems you already use, continuous control monitoring and automated evidence collection, AI-powered control mapping and workflows, and flexibility to support complex, enterprise environments.

(Remember: the software you adopt can make or break your success with automated governance, so it's crucial that you choose wisely.)

STEP 04

Integrate Essential Systems and Data Sources

Once you've selected a platform, be sure to connect all necessary systems, including:

- Cloud platforms
- Identity providers
- Ticketing tools
- HR/payroll systems
- Endpoint management
- SIEM and vulnerability management tools

STEP 05

Map Controls

Next, tie each control to the risk it mitigates, the policy requirement it fulfills, the framework it supports, and the data sources you can use to demonstrate it is operating properly. Accurately mapping controls enables your automation to continuously monitor and evaluate whether controls are working correctly.

STEP 06

Configure Your Logic

After mapping controls, you'll also need to codify how governance decisions work (i.e., pass/fail criteria, control frequency, exception rules, escalation paths) and enable workflows to notice failures, alert owners, create tickets, track remediation, and log proof. These guardrails ensure your automation interprets data effectively (instead of creating unnecessary noise or false confidence).

STEP 07

Train Stakeholders

For automated governance to be successful, you need to make sure all stakeholders understand how it works and their role in its success. You may also need to address fears about transparency (which is especially common among senior leadership) and explain why providing insight into your governance efforts helps your organization build trust and strengthen market value.

For teams that will be more hands-on, you'll need to demonstrate how controls are proven, what alerts mean, how remediation workflows operate, and how metrics tie back to risk posture and outcomes (as well as how to communicate that information to senior decision-makers). Additionally, be sure teams recognize when to incorporate human judgment so you create more challenges by over-relying on automation.

ONGOING

Shift Your Governance Culture

Implementing automated governance isn't just about integrating a new platform—it's also about fostering governance culture and appreciation for modern GRC activities. This shift can take time, but governance culture usually strengthens as teams witness the value these efforts bring to the organization, such as shorter sales cycles and audit cycles, shorter compliance review timelines, fewer control failures, increased customer trust, and overall risk reduction. Be sure to evangelize these outcomes as they happen.

Additionally, remember that you'll need to continuously refine your approach based on learnings and changing regulatory requirements. After all, complacency can be dangerous when it comes to any kind of automation.