



TECH STAR



## Eric Wolbrom: Security Expert of the Cyber Era

[By Akbar Ali]

With over two decades of experience in the technology industry working with network architecture, management, and security, Eric Wolbrom is leading the way in Internet and digital security in today's cyberworld. As CEO of KeepYouSafe, an innovative tech security company which offers clients an online safe deposit box, he has created a new outlet for individuals and businesses in search of new ways to ensure the safety of their most prized documents. An expert in maintaining the confidentiality of private information and documents, Wolbrom has become one of the most recognizable security experts of the digital age, frequently serving as both expert and commentator on related matters for CNN and other major media outlets, and he is recognized as one of the most prominent members of the New York Electronic Crimes Task Force.

A career as a technology expert was something Wolbrom never fathomed growing up in the 1970s, an era when personal computers and digital connections were outside the mainstream consciousness. It was his interest in communication, however, which would lead him into the modern revolution.

"My first technology experience began when one of my friends asked me to help him build a computer kit, which would become one of the first of its kind," Wolbrom recalls. "When it was done, we got an acoustic coupler and started dialing into main frames out of curiosity. I became very interested in communication and networking, which led me to what was then the ARPANET, [also known as] "hacking around."

"Throughout the rest of my high school career," he continues, "I was always interested in working with the newest technology, developing a gift for understanding how things worked and what didn't. This led me to an interest in the Human Interface design, and from one tech to the next, it led me to information security."

Wolbrom was also drawn to technology because of its fundamental purpose in facilitating communication, something he struggled with on a personal level.

"I'm a dyslexic," he explains, "and when I started using my first Mac, I understood on a profound level that the way people communicated was going to change. People

like me, who had no voice in the written world, would now be able to concentrate on what they were saying rather than on the mechanics of writing. This opened doors for me."

And why security? His family history laid a foundation of constant vigilance, derived from one of history's most infamous chapters.

"My grandparents and my father were Polish citizens during the war. They [barely] escaped the bombing of Warsaw, a story that is now a part of my family folklore. The message I grew up on was 'you must be prepared to run at a moment's notice,'" he says. "Hence, I became a 'paid paranoid,' and as such, one of my key interests became disaster recovery. This was the basis for [KeepYouSafe.com](http://KeepYouSafe.com)."

Wolbrom attended college but left short of graduating and began studying computer science on his own as the industry began to take root. His first official technology job was writing an accounting package for his father's company, which led to the computerization of the entire business. Ultimately, this led to consulting opportunities with other projects.

This was just the beginning of the rise to success for Wolbrom, who eschews any idea of a consciously-traveled career path as the foundation of his numerous accomplishments.

"What path? A path indicates a clear road ahead," Wolbrom says. "For me, it was more of a series of interests that I took advantage of. The one consistent interest was safe, clear, and easy communication for users and machines. I did network design and administration for a museum, software design and project management for a manufacturing firm, and general consulting for businesses and high net worth individuals."

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

**A.** Ski off of cliffs — (but I'm not that young any more).

**Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?**

**A.** CDs?! That is *sooo* last century! In my CD player I have vinyl... In all seriousness, my music tastes run from jazz to rock & roll and even some classical.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

**A.** *Powder*

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

**A.** Anything written by Aaron Sorkin (*Sports Night*, *The West Wing*) — oh and *Boston Legal*.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

**A.** Well I have an "Albert Einstein" action figure —

**Q. What makes you laugh?**

**A.** Stupid people



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"In 1998, I started my first company call Safe Harbor Technologies," he continues. "We were an information security consulting firm that was based around an elite 'Tiger Team.' SH Tech did security consulting in all 10 domains that comprise the InfoSec world. Our clients consisted of major financial services firms, entertainment companies, and manufacturing businesses from all over."

By 2000, Wolbrom had earned his Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) certification, though he lists his most memorable career achievement as his latest offering, Information Survival, which serves the full gamut of clientele, from the everyday lay person to national corporations.

"I consider myself an entrepreneur, and as such, I am always looking for my latest 'project,'" Wolbrom says. "However, the one I started with my partner last year, I would have to say is the most fun I have ever had. Information Survival is the company that owns [KeepYouSafe.com](http://KeepYouSafe.com). Our service brings to the general public, the tools, big businesses, and high net worth that families have had for years."

"[KeepYouSafe.com](http://KeepYouSafe.com) is an 'Online Safe Deposit Box,'" he continues. "It is a secure place on the Internet where members store their most critical 'life' records (for example, the contents of their wallet, medical records, front page of their passport, insurance documents, and even wills). All the material is encrypted with the same security the military uses to ensure that 'top secret' rated communication and data never falls into the wrong hands. Furthermore, members have access to their material from anywhere in the world using nothing more than a standard web browser, and they can be sure it will be there when they need it because we place their data in multiple servers around the world. Think of it as a personal disaster recovery program or family organization on steroids."

To the aspiring tech entrepreneur, Wolbrom advises maintaining a competitive edge and an awareness of developing technical trends, though the most important element to succeeding in the business is decidedly more fun.

"Well, in the information security 'game' it is just that, a game — so *play!*" he says. "Yes, I mean *play.*"

"Build a system and a home network," Wolbrom continues. "Play with the system, and try and hack into it. Think of your computers as puzzles — what does it take to make the complete picture, and how can you manipulate that picture to show you what *you* want to see? Join the ethical hacker boards, find out what is inside your system, and try everything you find (but *never* do any of what you learn to a system you have not been given permission to. Remember there is always someone out there that is better than you!)"

"Next, don't become system myopic: make sure you can work in any of them and can control them all," he explains. "The last thing is getting certified. Infosec has two really worthwhile certifying organizations, ISC (2) (pronounced I S C squared) and Global Information Assurance Certification (GIAC). Don't waste your money or time with vendor-specific certifications (except for maybe a firewall setup course like Cisco PIX and the like)."

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