

CYBER SECURITY

As a teenager, Mr Andre Ng was the go-to person for friends who had computer-related problems.

He found himself helping them recover accidentally deleted files, remove malware and install anti-malware software during his spare time.

Today, he is still helping to prevent digital flaws – but on a much larger scale.

As an associate cybersecurity specialist at GovTech, the 28-year-old manages and runs bug bounties for the Government.

He works with international and local white-hat hackers to identify flaws or weaknesses in government digital services.

These hackers are given cash rewards when they discover genuine vulnerabilities within such services.

He said: "My job is to create an environment where white-hat hackers and the Government can form a mutually beneficial relationship. (It is) one that strengthens the cyber-security pos-



ture of the Government, while acknowledging the value that the white-hats bring to the table."

The months leading up to a new bug bounty programme is when Mr Ng is at his busiest.

Some of his key duties include meeting with various teams of engineers to ensure that their systems are adequately prepared to withstand intrusive testing, as well as briefing system owners on what to expect and how to respond to vulnerability reports.

"I would also need to engage the local cyber-security communities to gather interest and participation," he added.

Mr Ng pointed out that "the most important quality for a person to perform this job is to have the ability to collaborate and arrive at an arrangement that is win-win".

"This quality is essential because building up trust is important in long-lasting working relationships," he said.

Mr Ng, who graduated from Singapore Management University (SMU) in 2016, credited his studies for giving him a "good blend" of technical skills in policy, strategy, and management.

He was part of the SMU-CMU Fast Track Programme, and he graduated with a degree in information systems from SMU and a master's degree in security policy & management from

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in the United States.

What he found most rewarding about his studies was getting the chance to learn from some of the best in a given field.

He said: "Most professors in SMU and CMU spent a good number of years perfecting their craft and would not hesitate to share more than what was covered in the syllabus if you demonstrated a genuine interest to know more or ask more about the research they do."

"Many of these 'out of syllabus' lessons became useful later at work for me," he added.

IN HIS WORDS

For those interested in following his footsteps, Mr Ng advised them to always keep an open and curious mind.

He said that it was especially important for them to look out for opportunities in emerging areas, as the industry's fast-paced nature means that "new areas of profession are rapidly created and disrupted at the same time".

"So being curious and having the ability to pick up new skills from time to time is imperative to survival in the long run, more so than having good grades in school," he added.

Nur Syahidah Zainal