



W4C GR
CYBERSECURITY
WOMAN PROFILE OF
THE MONTH

INTERVIEW WITH THEOFANO!

Name: Theofano Somaripa

Job Position: CIO

Current Employer: Newport SA Group

Cybersecurity areas of expertise: Cybersecurity Governance & Strategy, Maritime & OT Cybersecurity

Previous career(s): Business Analyst-TMS Tankers, ICT -Cypus Sealines, PMS Analyst /ICT- Minerva Marine

Educational background: Bsc,Msc Naval Architect/ Marine Engineer, MBA in Digital Transformation, Diploma in Cybersecurity & Risk Management, AI in Cyber security, Quantum Computing, Chief AI Officer and Business Analytics

Other interests/hobbies: Tennis, Traveling, Video Games, Reading

Favourite quote: Order can be shaped even within chaos.

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Are you hiring? : Yes

Intro & Inspirational

1. Which values are guiding your life and work?

Ethics — expressed through responsibility, integrity, and accountability in every decision

2. What's the most important life lesson you've learned?

That trust should never be blind; it must be earned and verified over time

3. How do you define success? And what's the best advice that you can give about success?

For me, success is not the end goal. It's a milestone — a moment to acknowledge progress, learn from it, and then move on to the next challenge.

My biggest piece of advice is to stay patient. I've learned that success shows up after you've done the work — not while you're chasing it. Most people burn out because they are hunting for a 'win' every single day. Instead, just focus on building the right habits and a solid mindset. If you get the foundation right, the success will find you.

4. Do you think your job makes a difference? How?

I used to dream of being an astrophysicist and exploring the unknown universe. Today, my 'universe' is the maritime industry. People don't realize that 90% of everything we own arrives by sea, and my job is to make sure that journey is safe and smart.

I don't just manage servers or cables; I help run the systems that keep global trade moving. The most rewarding parts of my work are actually the things you don't see: the crisis that never happened, the data breach we stopped, and the calm decisions made when the pressure was on. Every digital tool we build helps a crew stay safe or a ship run cleaner. It's about making sure that even in the middle of the ocean, technology works for people, not against them.

5. What is the best and the worst piece of advice you received? (+How did you unlearn the latter or use it to your favour?)

Best advice:

"Don't compete with the smartest person in the room — collaborate with them."

Progress accelerates when you build alliances instead of feeding your ego.

Worst advice:

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

In technology, waiting for failure is often the most expensive strategy. I learned to use this mindset to my advantage by acting early and leading change before disruption forces it.

6. Can you name a book that has influenced your journey?

"The Great Gatsby is a constant reminder that not every form of success is worth the cost. In the world of Digitalization, if you sacrifice your strategic integrity or your people's sanity for a 'green light' of hype, you haven't won; you've just overpaid for a tragedy."

Cybersecurity General

7. How can someone stand out in a competitive cybersecurity job market?

By understanding the business problem behind the security role. Technical skills matter, but what really differentiates candidates is the ability to explain risk, trade-offs, and impact in a way decision-makers understand.

8. What trends in the technology & cybersecurity industry are you keeping an eye on for the future?

Agentic AI: "From tools to agents—the era of autonomous, 24/7 bot-on-bot warfare."

Post-Quantum Cryptography: "Today's encryption is tomorrow's confetti. The race for quantum-resistance is on."

Identity-First Security: "The perimeter is dead. Identity is the new firewall."

9. What is the most common mistake someone could make when applying for a role in the cybersecurity industry? What do you believe makes a successful candidate/application?

The most common mistake is focusing only on tools and certifications.

A successful candidate demonstrates judgment, curiosity, and an understanding of how security supports business continuity and resilience.

10. Do you believe that there are misconceptions people make about working in the cybersecurity industry?

The biggest myth is that cybersecurity is a job for 'lone wolves' in dark basements. In reality, it's 20% technology and 80% communication and psychology. You aren't just managing firewalls; you are managing human behavior. To be effective, you must convince people to change their habits—and that requires high-level social skills, not just terminal skills.

11. Which concrete recommendations would you give to women who want to change career and join cybersecurity?

Don't fear the 'tech gap.' Your previous experience in law, management, or healthcare is your golden ticket. The industry, especially in GRC (Governance, Risk, Compliance), desperately needs professionals who can navigate complex regulations and processes.

12. Do you (or did you) have a mentor or someone who guided you? What is your opinion on mentoring as well as on getting a start via an internship/traineeship? Are you planning to mentor or coach others in the future, or have you been mentoring already?

Mentorship is essential because cybersecurity is learned through exposure, not theory alone.

Internships and traineeships are valuable entry points when paired with guidance and responsibility.

I strongly believe in mentoring and coaching, and I actively support developing the next generation through knowledge-sharing and leadership guidance.

You & Your job

13. What was your childhood dream job (and why you liked it)?

I dreamt of becoming an Astrophysicist. I was captivated by the idea of exploring the unknown universe and mapping the stars. Looking back, I haven't strayed far from that path; Digital Transformation and AI in the maritime industry are simply my way of mapping a different kind of 'digital ocean'—one that is just as vast, unpredictable, and full of hidden potential as the cosmos.

14. What has been your most exciting role to date?

My current role as CIO. It is the definitive moment where strategy meets execution. Building a digitalization roadmap from the ground up—especially in an industry like maritime, which serves as the backbone of the global economy—is the ultimate 'high.' There is nothing more rewarding than taking a theoretical vision and turning it into a functional, digital reality that moves the needle on a global scale.

15. What role has networking played in your skill development?

Networking has been essential – not for visibility, but for learning.

The right conversations accelerate perspective faster than any course

16. Do you have any passion or side-projects you're focusing on?

My project focuses on corporate mentoring and coaching, knowledge-sharing, and developing the next generation of IT leaders – while promoting a more ethical, human-centric use of technology.

Other

17. How do you handle criticism?

I won't pretend it's always easy - Criticism challenges me, but it also sharpens my self-awareness and decision-making over time.

18. How do you manage stress?

Managing Stress through Ikigai

I manage stress by consciously recalibrating my personal ikigai – my reason for being. It is a Japanese framework that explores the alignment between purpose, strengths, contribution, and value creation.

Through my coaching practice, I actively work with ikigai as a decision-making and self-regulation tool. In high-pressure environments, stress usually signals misalignment; clarity is restored when purpose, responsibility, and action are brought back into balance.

Cybersecurity is considered a very demanding and “intrusive” career in someone’s life (takes a lot of hours, lots of learning constantly, you are “seeing” cybersecurity triggers everywhere even outside of work). How do you balance work and personal life?

By accepting that balance is not static. In a 24/7 industry, there are periods where work demands more – and I am honest about the fact that this sometimes comes at the expense of personal time and well-being.

19. What do you do to prevent burnout in such a demanding line of work?

I've learned that staying resilient isn't about running faster; it's about knowing when to ease off. It's like a ship's engine—you can't push it at full speed 24/7 without something eventually breaking. Now, I work in short bursts. I give it my all, and then I make sure to take a breather to recharge. It's not just about avoiding a crash; it's because I know that if I don't clear my head, I lose my creativity. Taking that time isn't a luxury—it's how I make sure I'm actually ready for whatever comes next

20. How do you set boundaries in the workplace?

By being clear about expectations, responsibilities, and decision ownership.

Boundaries are not about saying no – they are about ensuring focus, accountability, and respect.