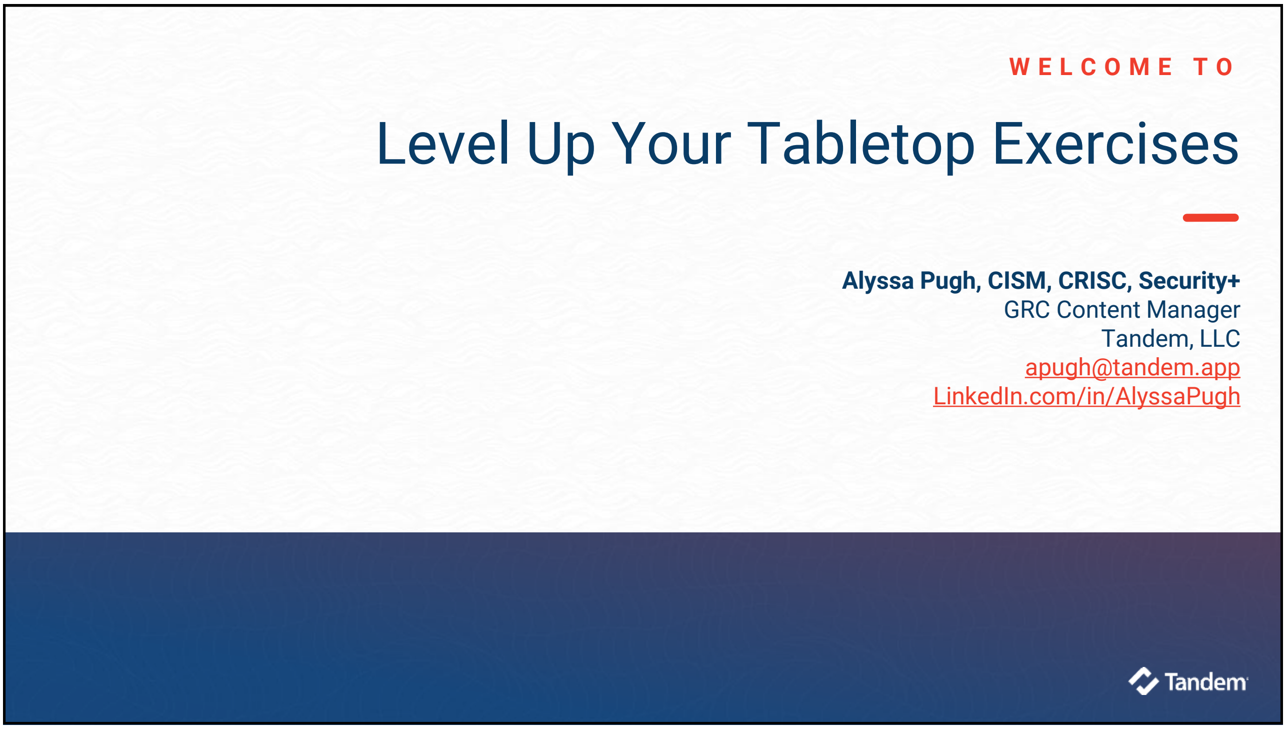

WELCOME TO

# Level Up Your Tabletop Exercises

**Alyssa Pugh, CISM, CRISC, Security+**
GRC Content Manager
Tandem, LLC
apugh@tandem.app
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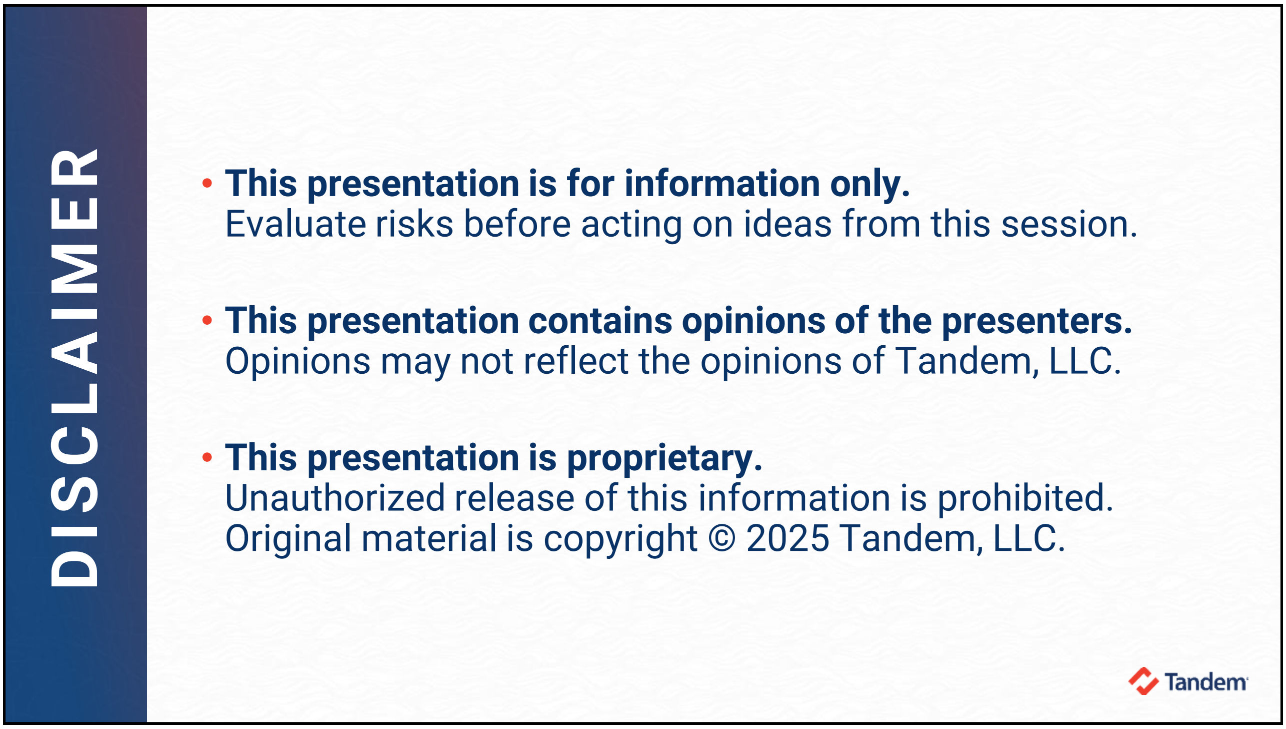

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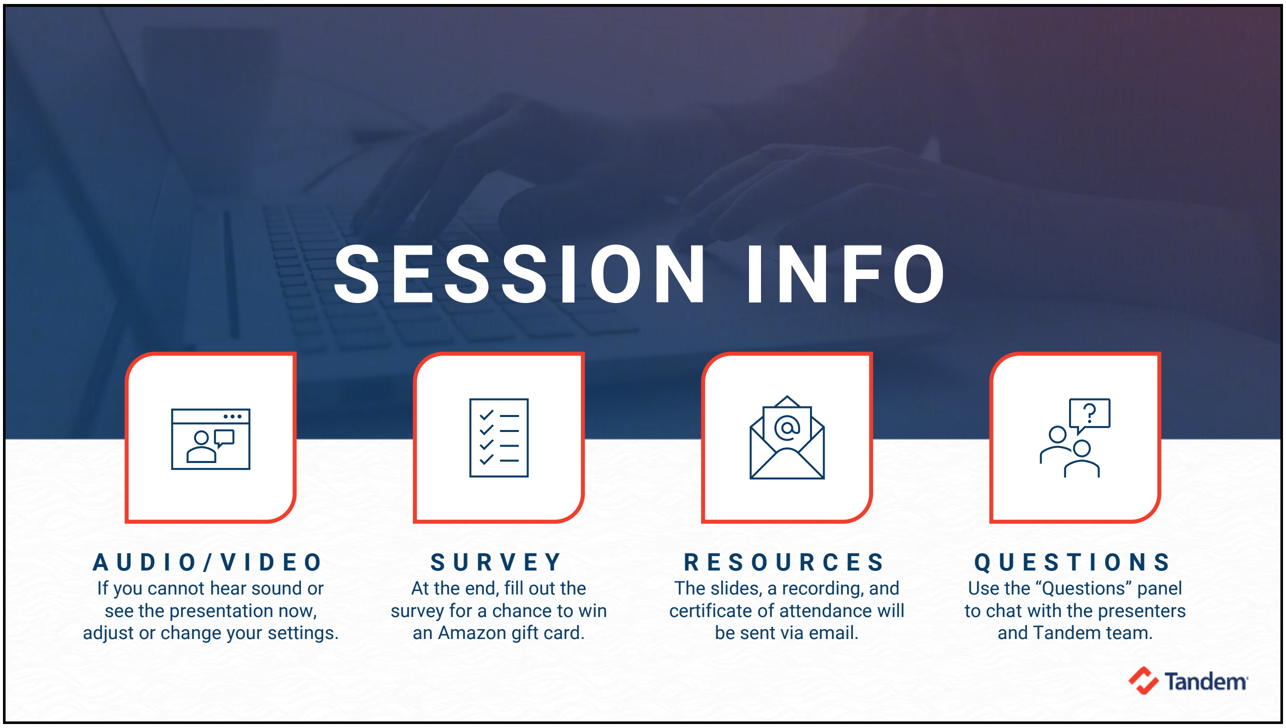

# SESSION INFO

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- Business Continuity Plan
- Compliance Management
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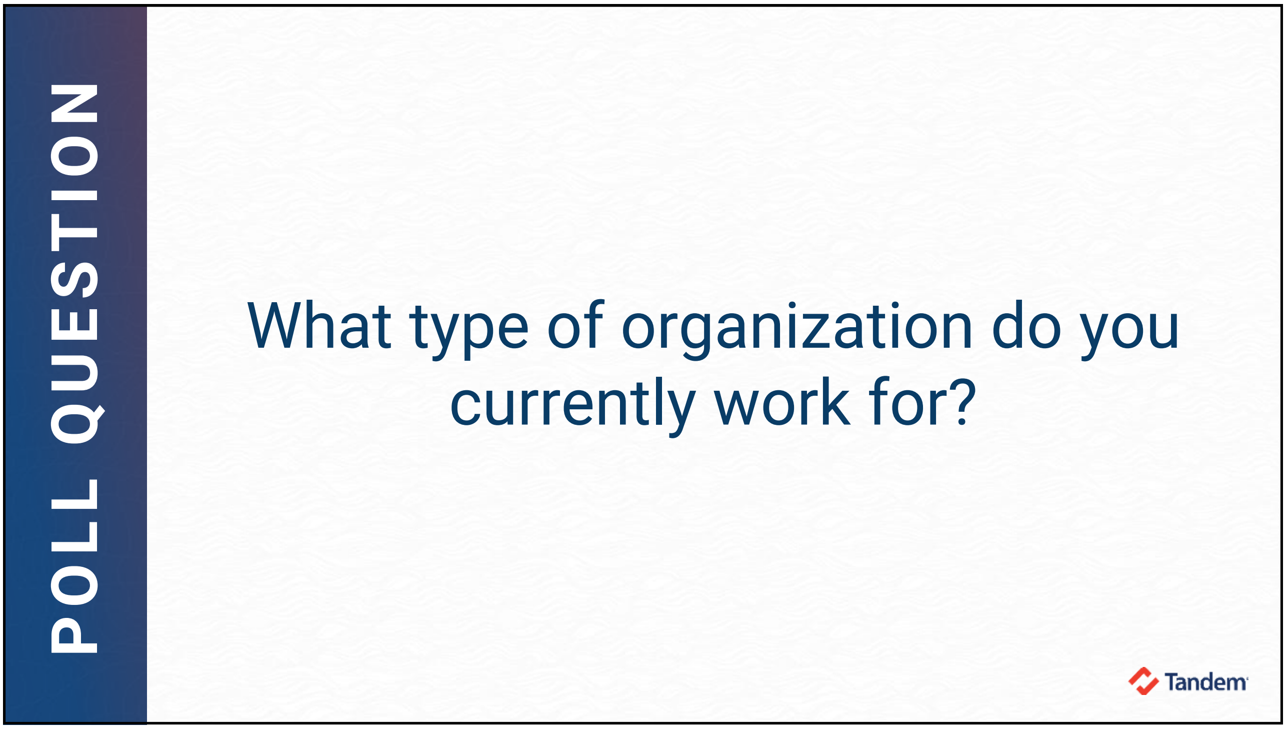

POLL QUESTION

What type of organization do you currently work for?

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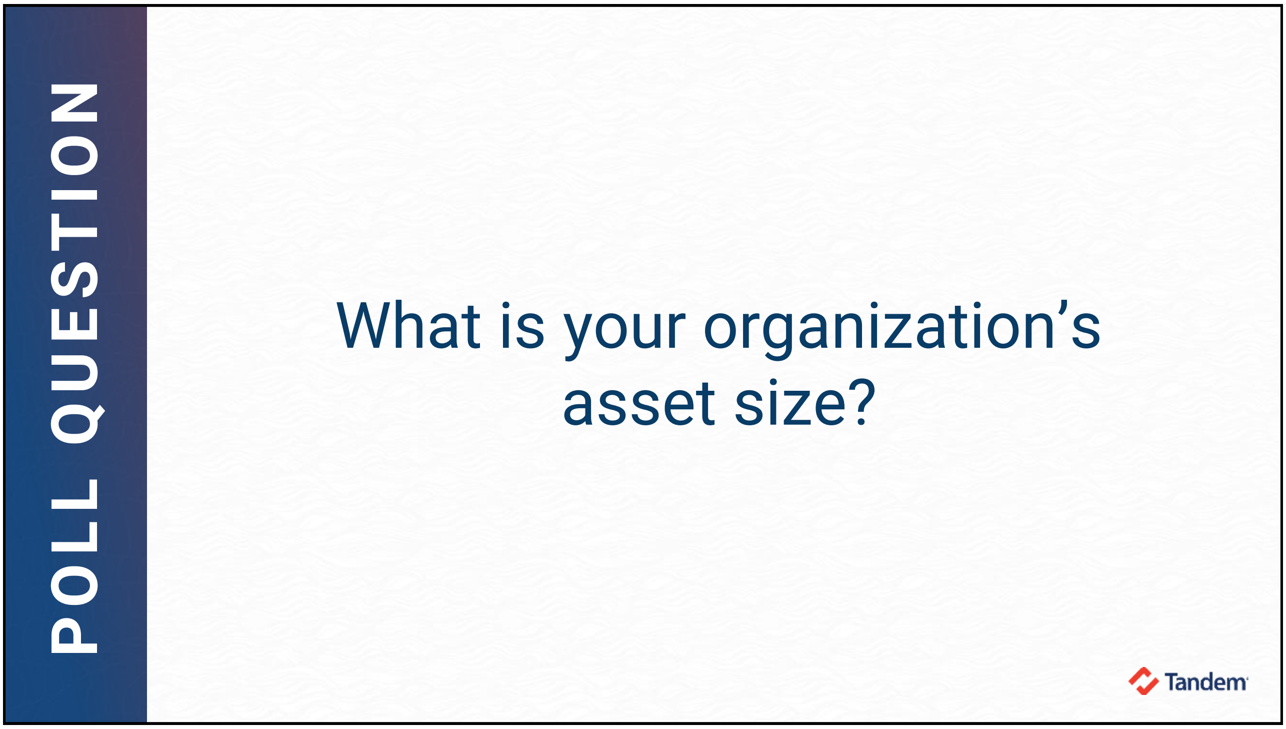

POLL QUESTION

What is your organization’s asset size?

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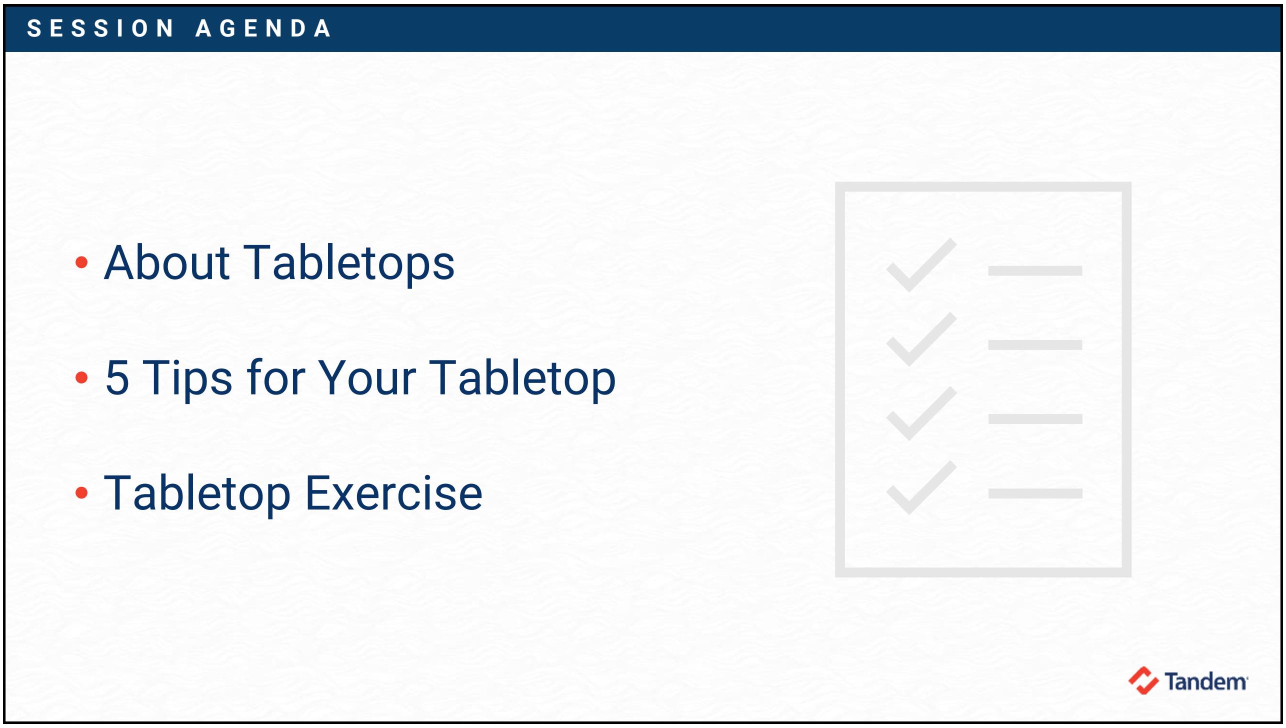

## SESSION AGENDA

- About Tabletops
- 5 Tips for Your Tabletop
- Tabletop Exercise

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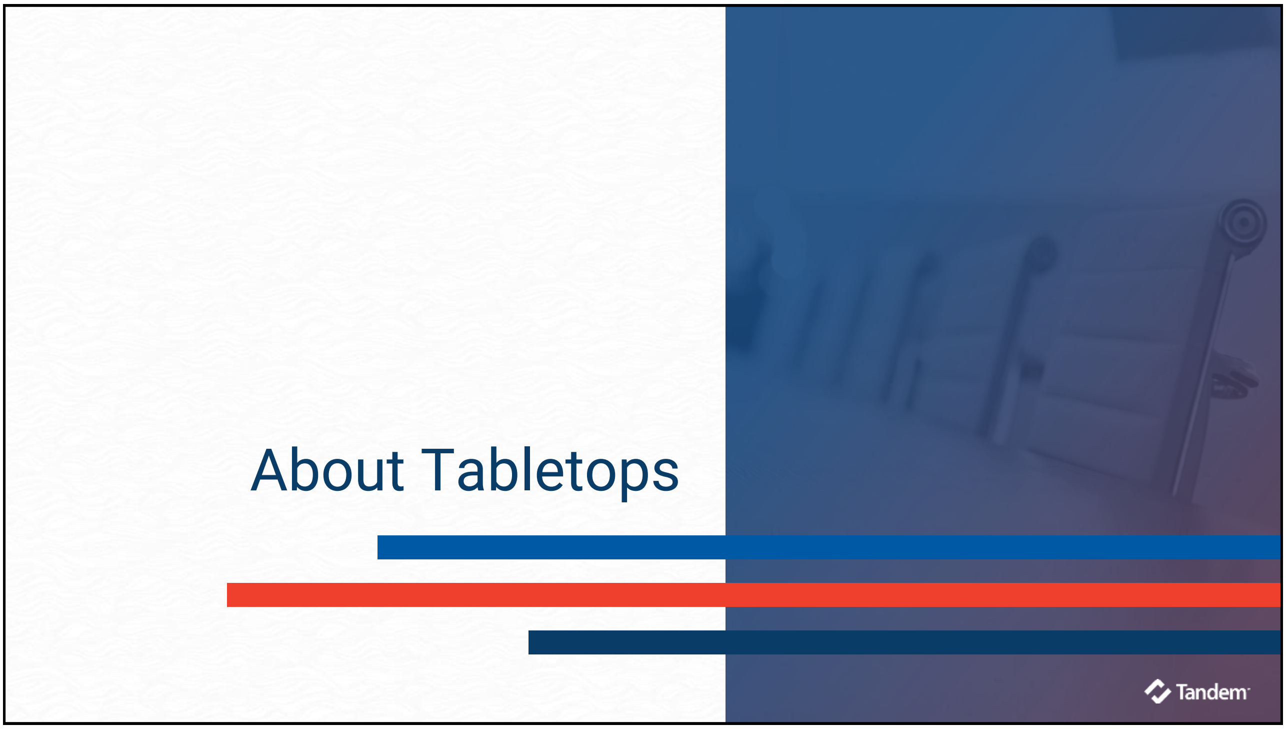

## About Tabletops

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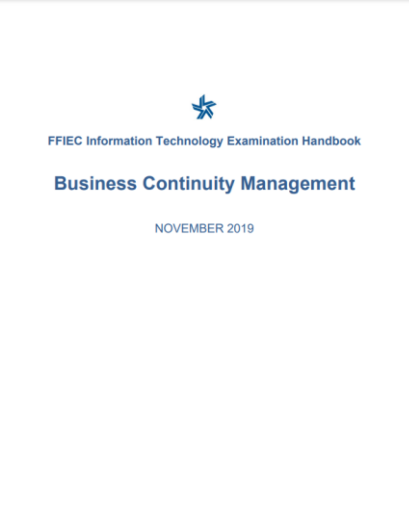
## DEFINITION

"A tabletop exercise (sometimes referred to as a walk-through) is a discussion during which personnel review their BCP-defined roles and discuss their responses during an adverse event simulation."

https://ithandbook.ffiec.gov/it-booklets/business-continuity-management/vii-exercises-and-tests/viig-exercise-and-test-methods/viig3-tabletop-exercise



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## NIST Cybersecurity Framework

### ID.IM-02

Improvements are identified from **security tests and exercises**, including those done in coordination with suppliers and relevant third parties.

- **Ex1:** Identify improvements for future incident response activities based on findings from incident response assessments (e.g., **tabletop exercises and simulations**, **tests**, internal reviews, independent audits).
- **Ex2:** Identify improvements for future business continuity, disaster recovery, and incident response activities based on **exercises** performed in coordination with critical service providers and product suppliers.
- **Ex3:** Involve internal stakeholders (e.g., senior executives, legal department, HR) in **security tests and exercises** as appropriate.

https://csrc.nist.gov/projects/cybersecurity-framework/filters#/csf/filters

## CISA Cybersecurity Performance Goals

### 2.S Incident Response (IR) Plans

Organizations have, maintain, update, and regularly **drill** IT and OT cybersecurity incident response plans for both common and organization-specific (e.g., by sector, locality) threat scenarios and TTPs. When conducted, **tests or drills** are as realistic as feasible. IR plans are **drilled** at least annually and are updated within a risk-informed time frame following the lessons learned portion of any **exercise or drill**.

https://www.cisa.gov/cybersecurity-performance-goals-cpgs

## CIS Critical Security Controls

### 17.7 Conduct Routine Incident Response Exercises

Plan and conduct routine **incident response exercises and scenarios** for key personnel involved in the incident response process to prepare for responding to real-world incidents. **Exercises** need to test communication channels, decision-making, and workflows. Conduct **testing** on an annual basis, at a minimum.

https://www.cisecurity.org/controls/cis-controls-list

## CRI Profile

### ID.RA-05.04

The organization uses **scenario planning, table-top-exercises, or similar event analysis techniques** to identify vulnerabilities and determine potential impacts to critical infrastructure, technology, and business processes.

### ID.IM-04.08

The organization regularly reviews response strategy, incident management plans, recovery plans, and **associated tests and exercises** and updates them, as necessary, based on: (1) Lessons learned from incidents that have occurred (both internal and external to the organization); (2) Current cyber threat intelligence (both internal and external sources); (3) Recent and wide-scale cyber attack scenarios; (4) Operationally and technically plausible future cyber attacks; (5) Organizational or technical environment changes; and, (6) New technological developments.

https://cyberriskinstitute.org/the-profile/

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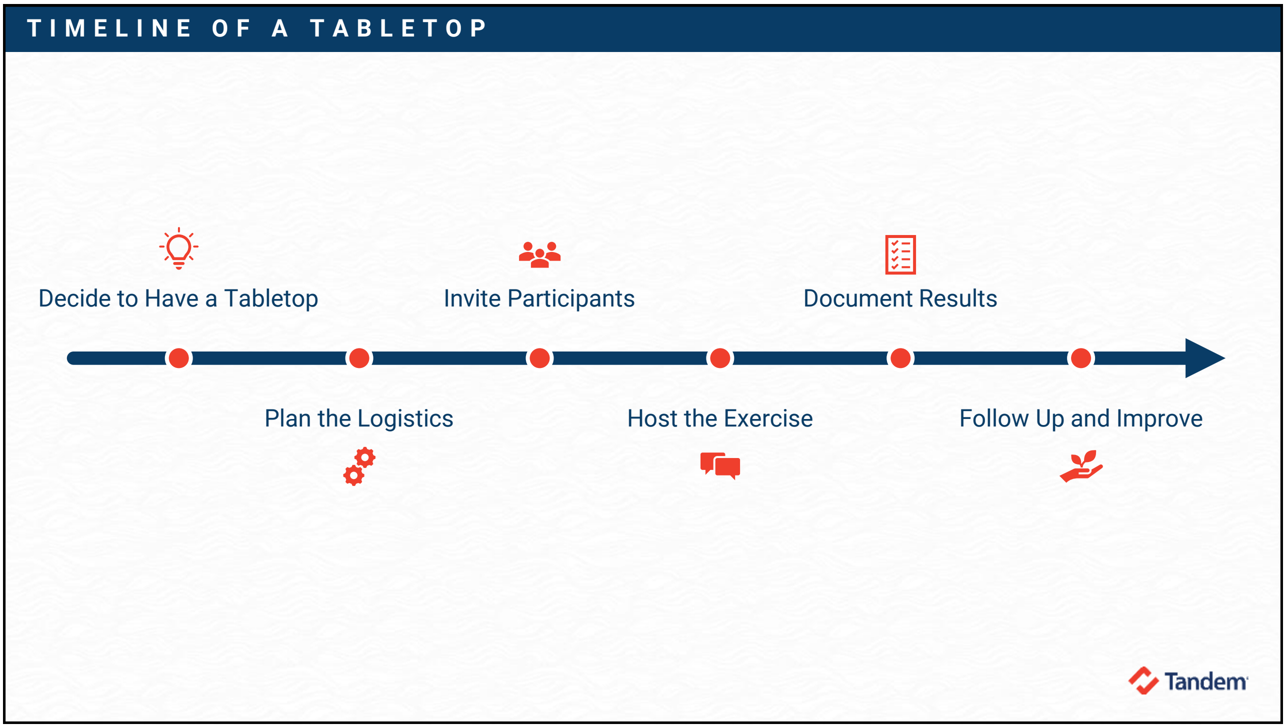

## TIMELINE OF A TABLETOP

Decide to Have a Tabletop

Plan the Logistics

Invite Participants

Host the Exercise

Document Results

Follow Up and Improve

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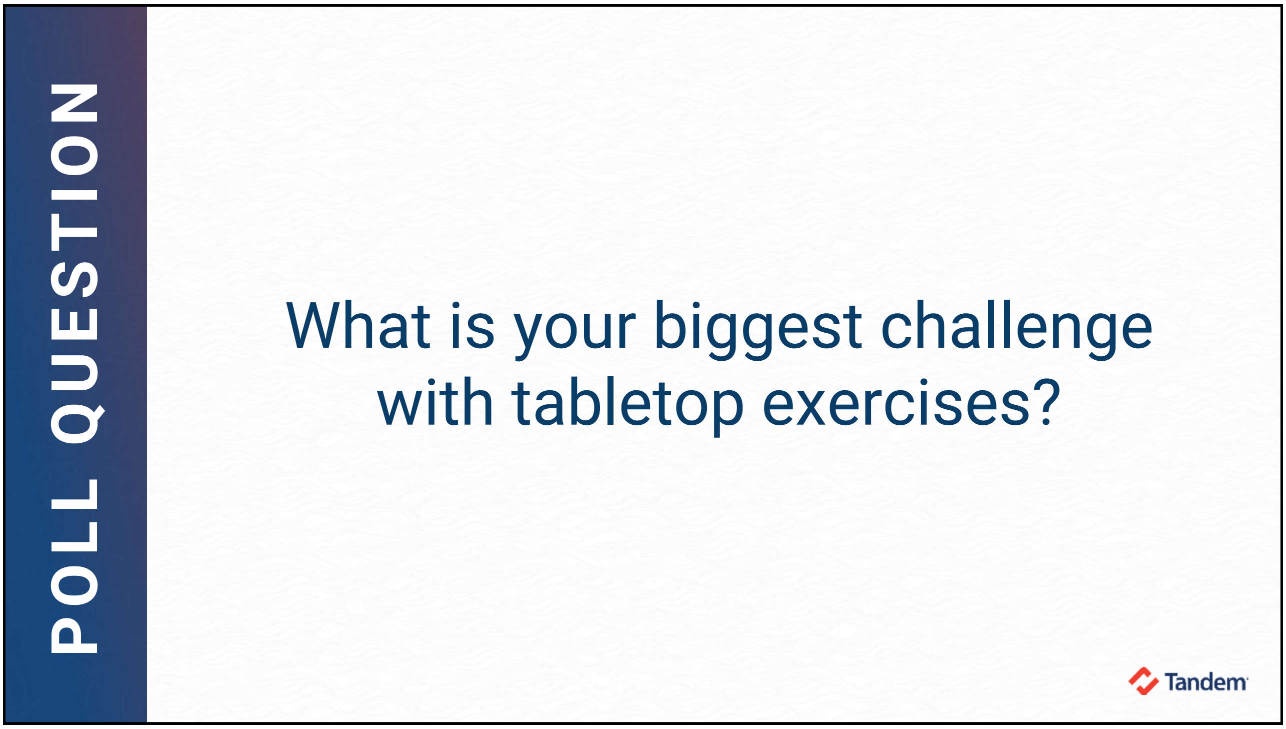

## POLL QUESTION

What is your biggest challenge with tabletop exercises?

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# 5 Tips for Your Tabletop

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TIP #1

# Design a Compelling Scenario

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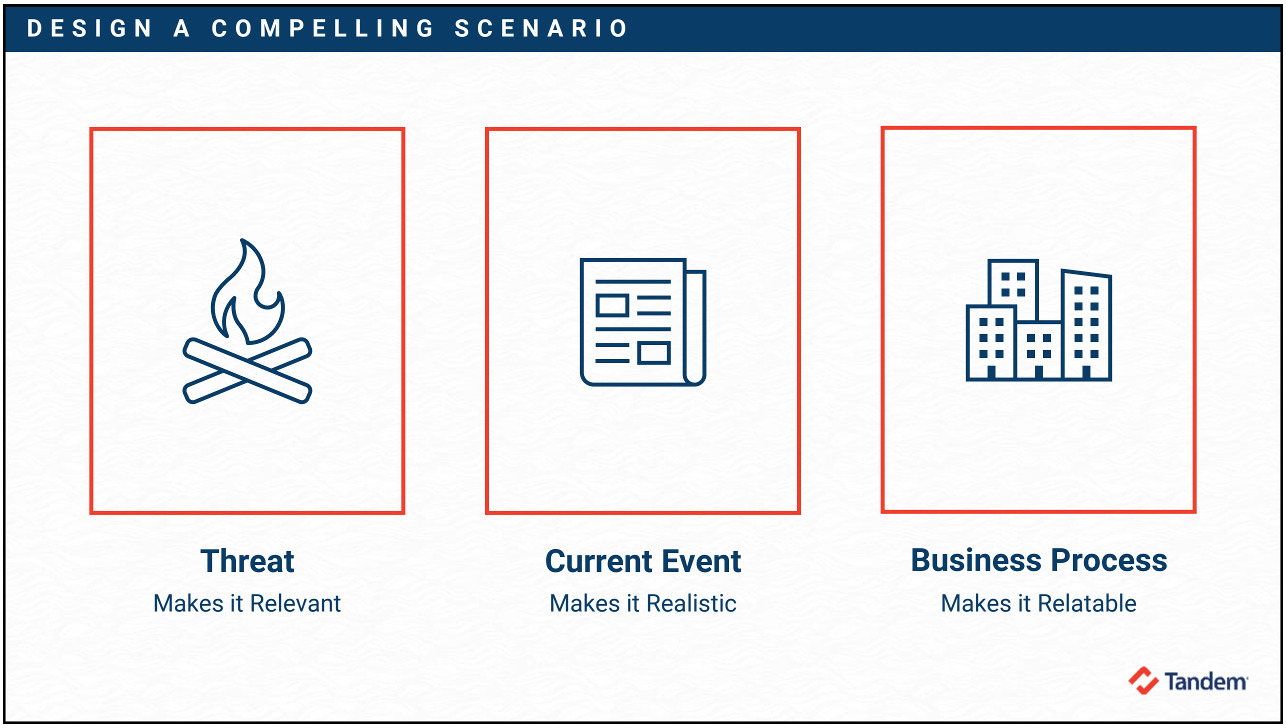

## DESIGN A COMPELLING SCENARIO

**Threat**
Makes it Relevant

**Current Event**
Makes it Realistic

**Business Process**
Makes it Relatable

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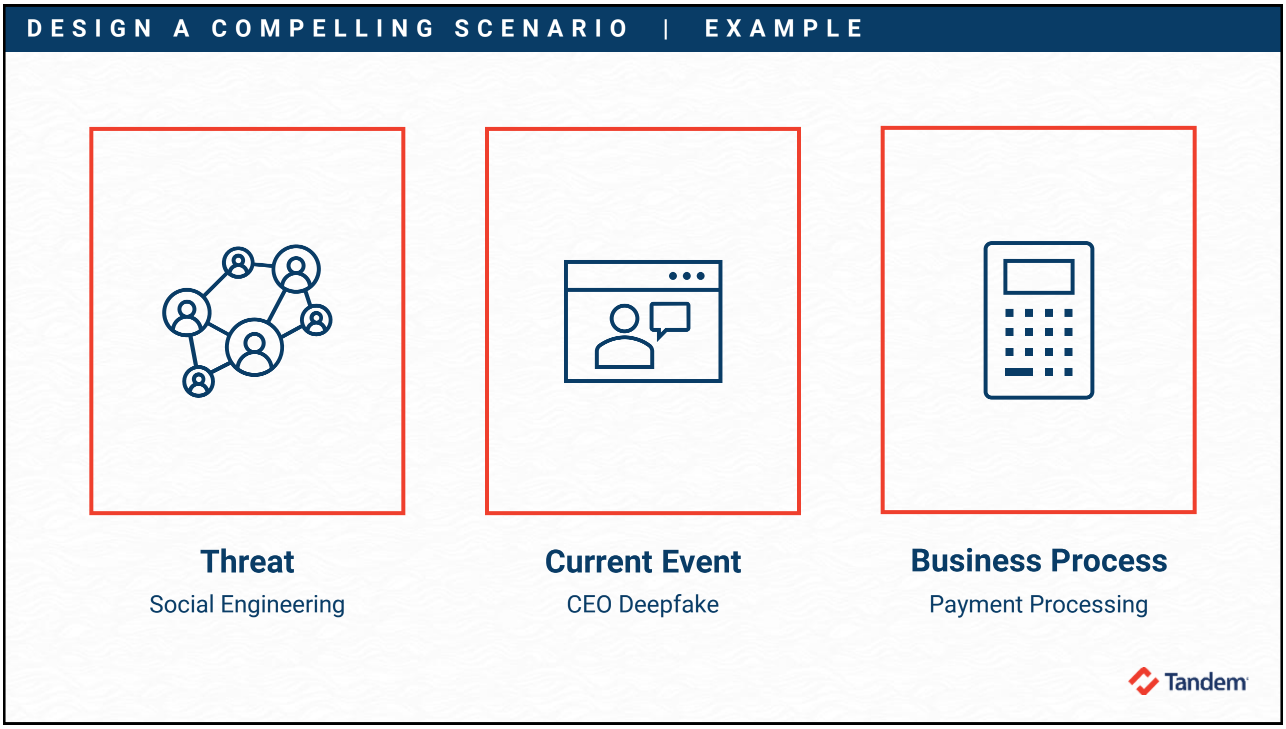

## DESIGN A COMPELLING SCENARIO | EXAMPLE

**Threat**
Social Engineering

**Current Event**
CEO Deepfake

**Business Process**
Payment Processing

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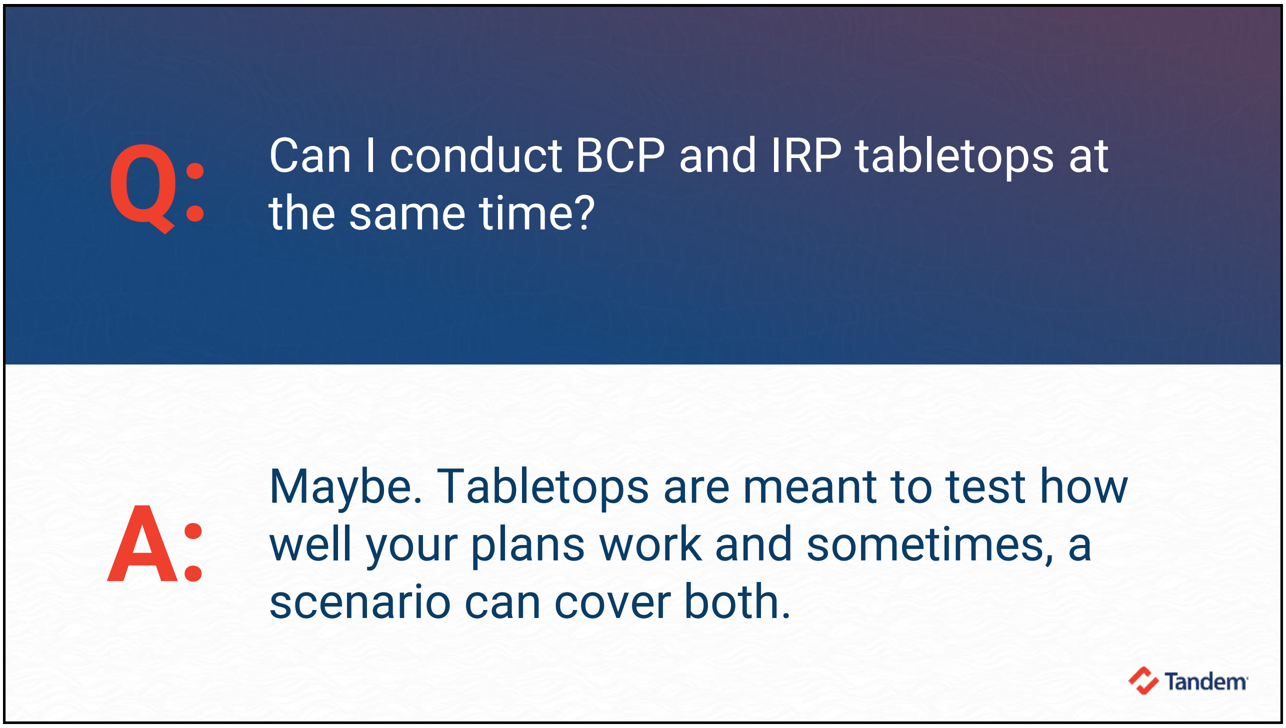

Q: Can I conduct BCP and IRP tabletops at the same time?

A: Maybe. Tabletops are meant to test how well your plans work and sometimes, a scenario can cover both.

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TIP #2

## Gather the Right Team

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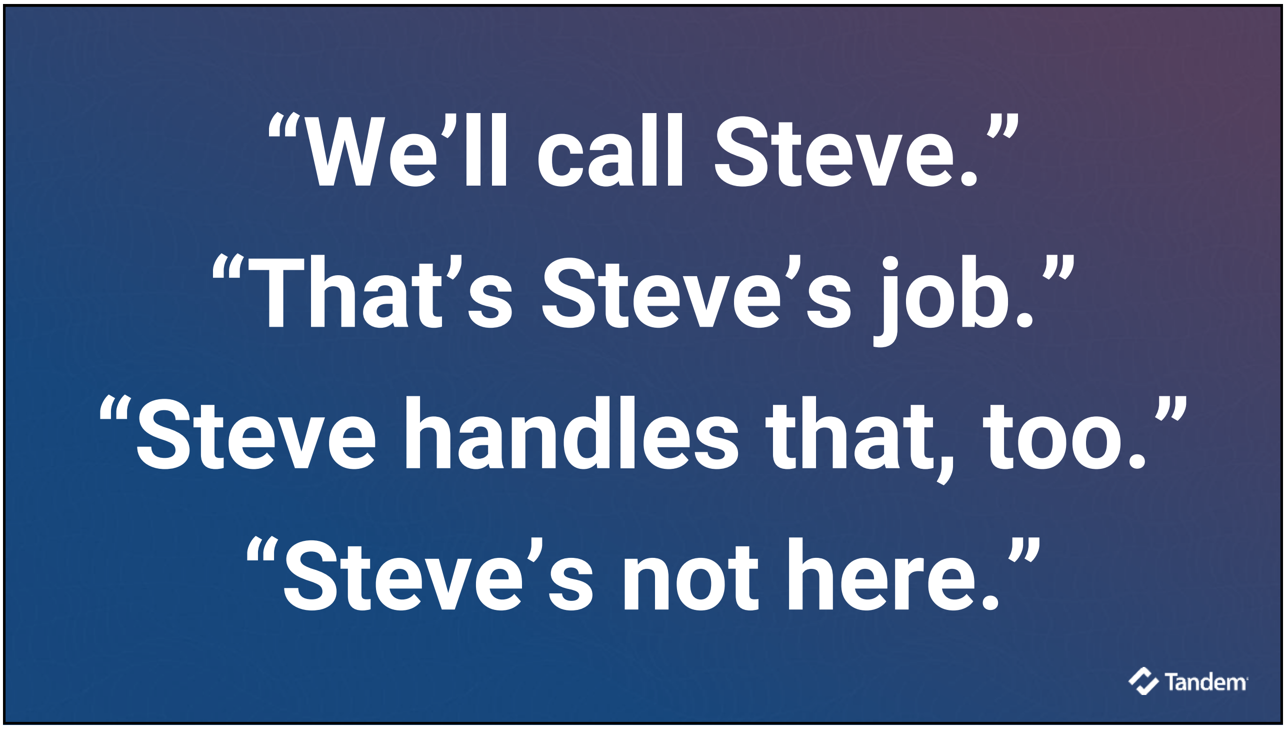

“We’ll call Steve.”
“That’s Steve’s job.”
“Steve handles that, too.”
“Steve’s not here.”

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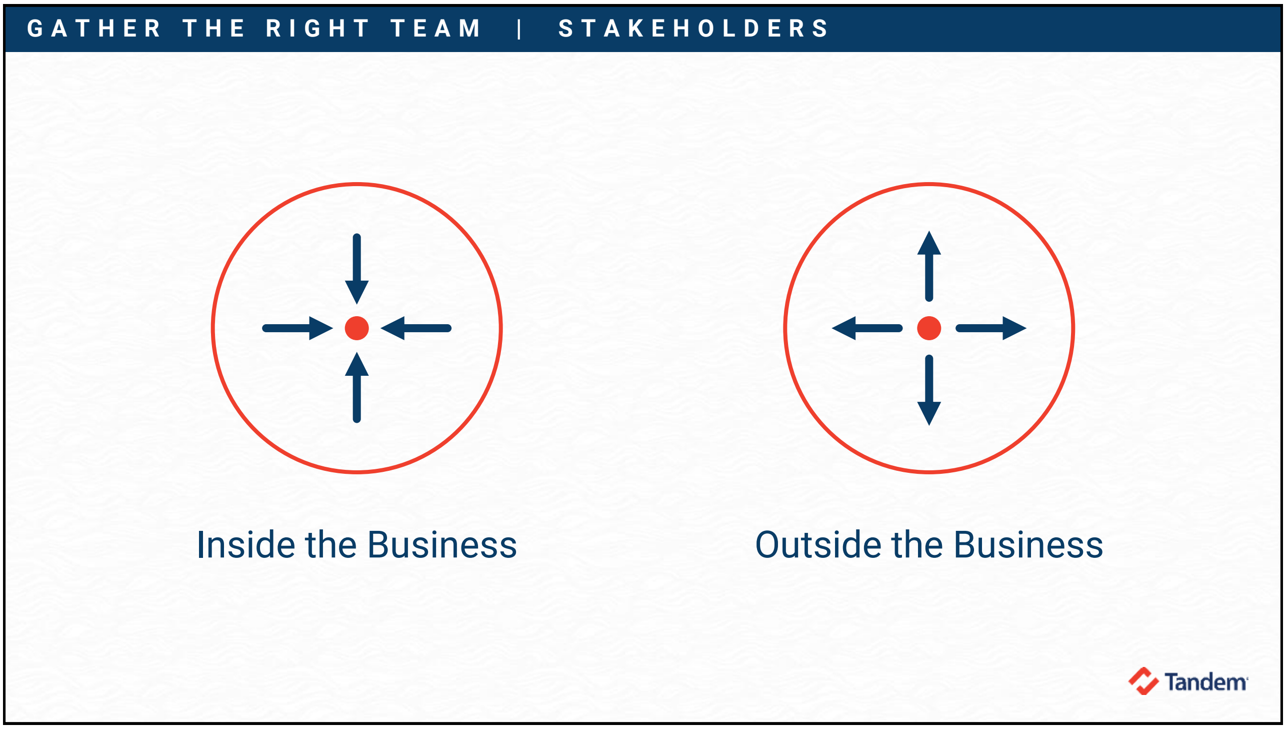

GATHER THE RIGHT TEAM | STAKEHOLDERS

Inside the Business

Outside the Business

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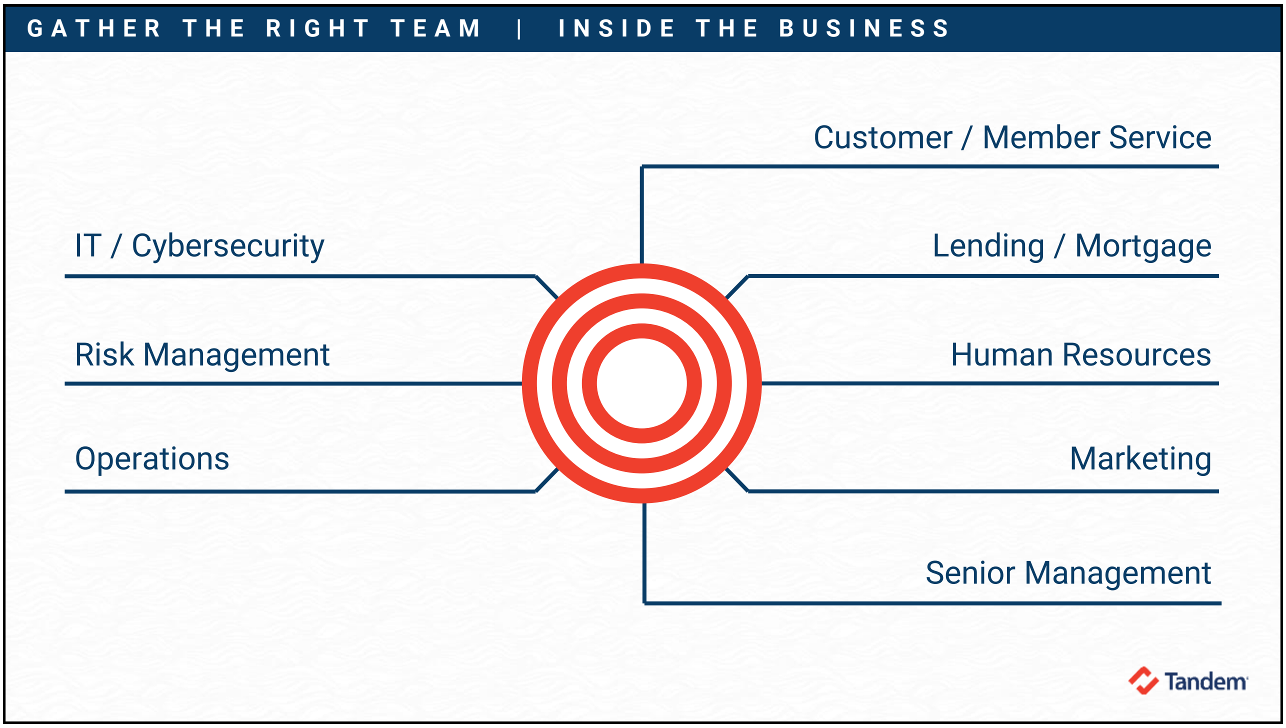

## GATHER THE RIGHT TEAM | INSIDE THE BUSINESS

IT / Cybersecurity

Risk Management

Operations

Customer / Member Service

Lending / Mortgage

Human Resources

Marketing

Senior Management

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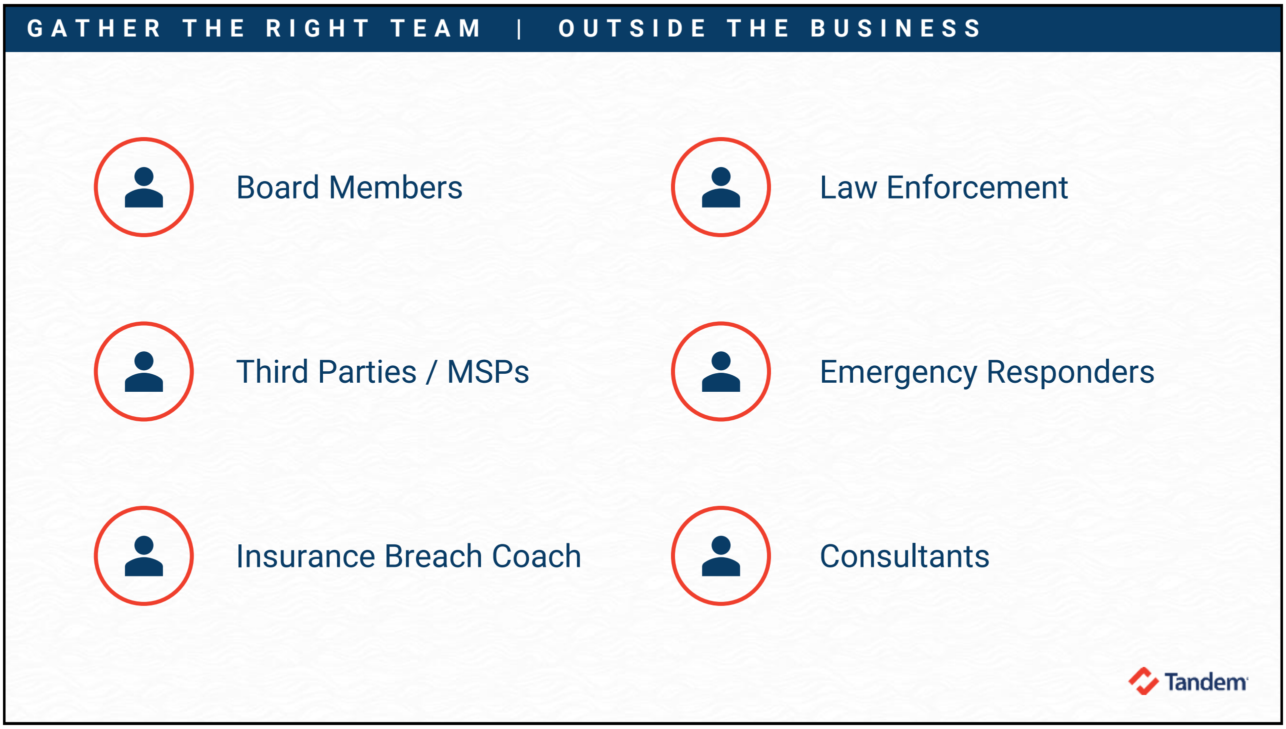

## GATHER THE RIGHT TEAM | OUTSIDE THE BUSINESS

- Board Members
- Third Parties / MSPs
- Insurance Breach Coach
- Law Enforcement
- Emergency Responders
- Consultants

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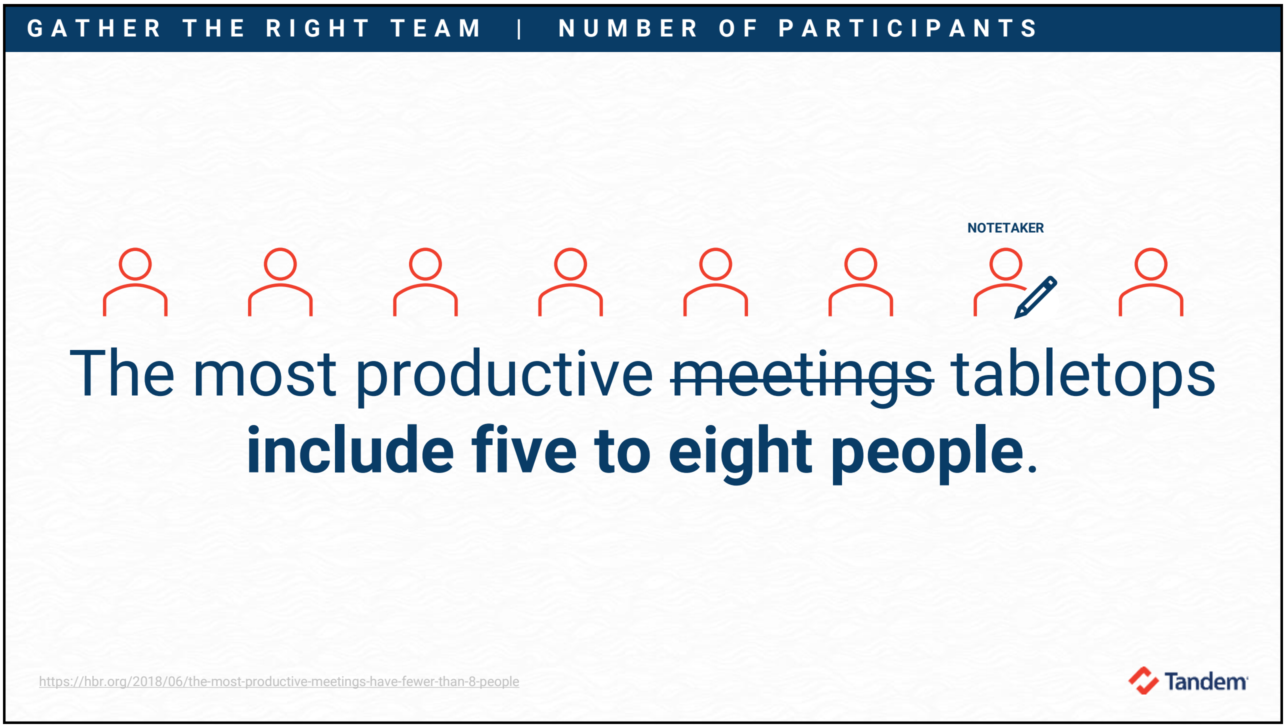

GATHER THE RIGHT TEAM | NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

The most productive ~~meetings~~ tabletops **include five to eight people**.

https://hbr.org/2018/06/the-most-productive-meetings-have-fewer-than-8-people

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TIP #3

## Schedule Strategically

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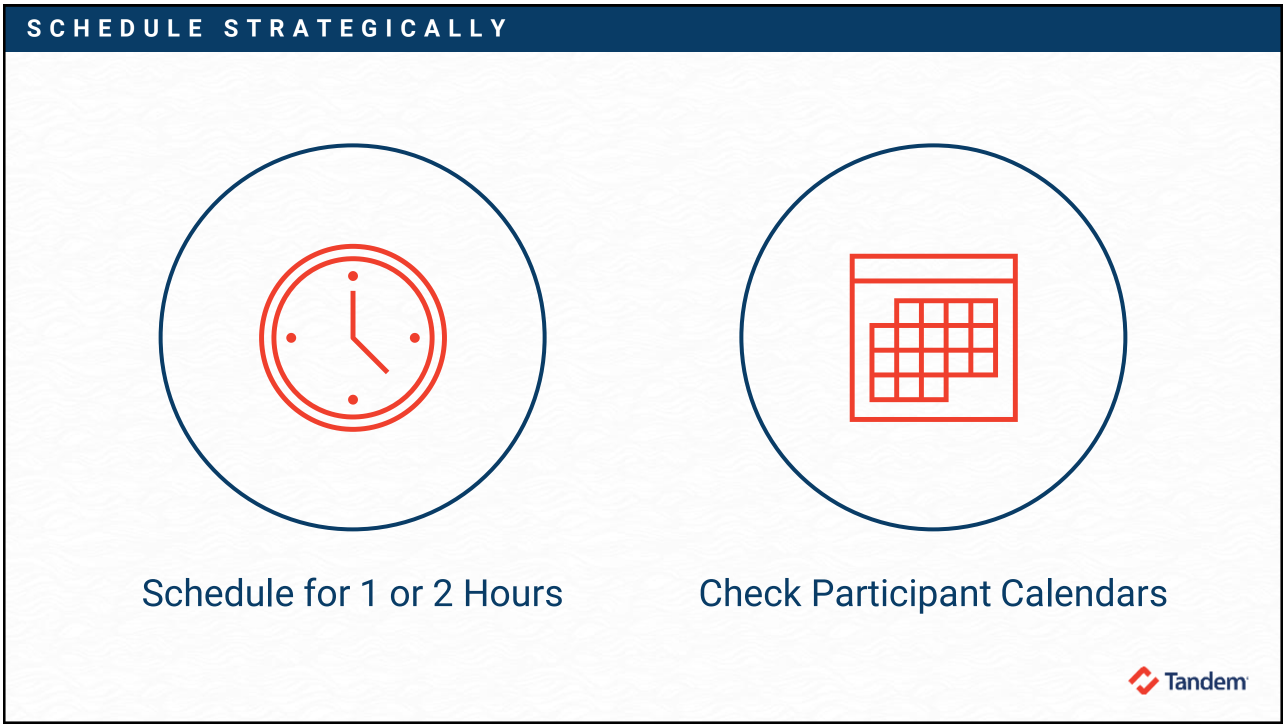

## SCHEDULE STRATEGICALLY

Schedule for 1 or 2 Hours

Check Participant Calendars

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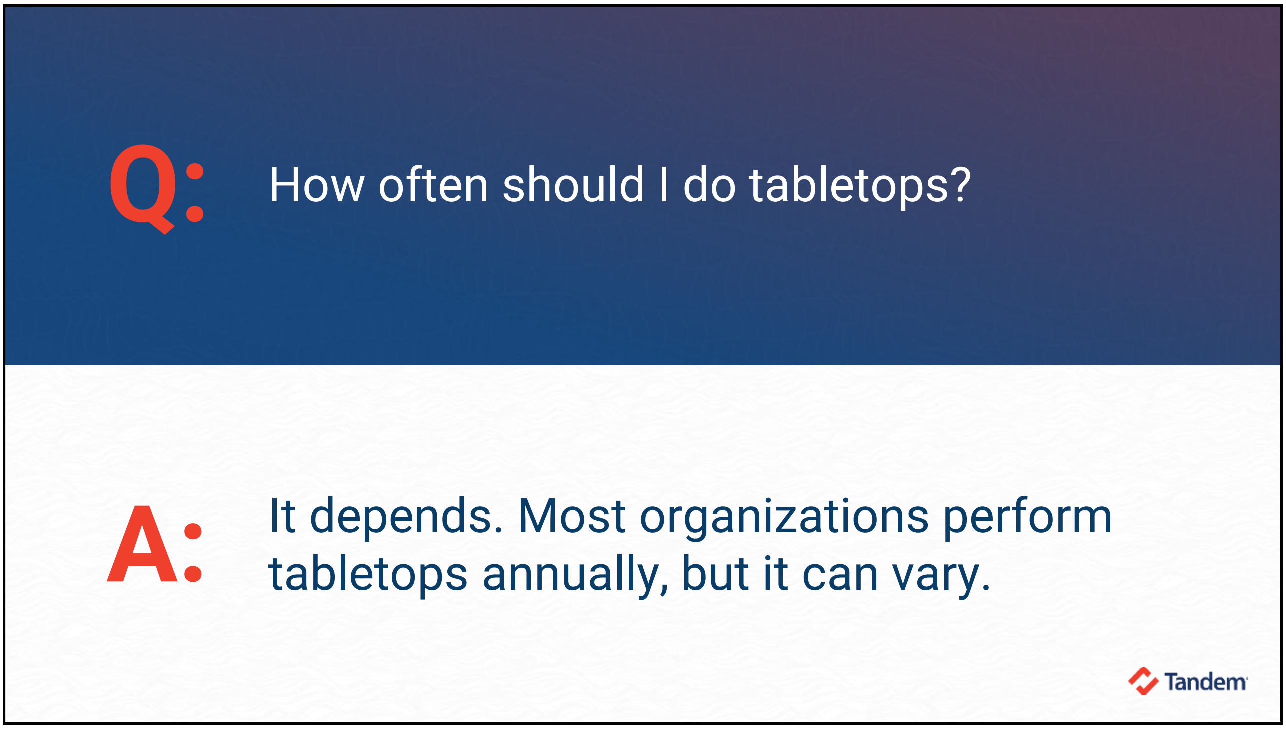

Q: How often should I do tabletops?

A: It depends. Most organizations perform tabletops annually, but it can vary.

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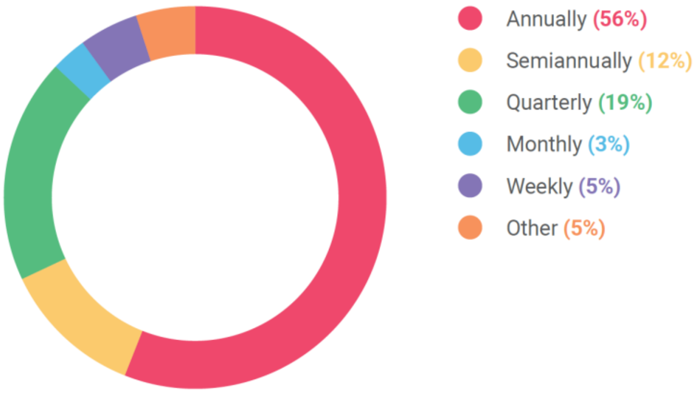
## SCHEDULE STRATEGICALLY | STATE OF CYBERSECURITY REPORT

### BCP EXERCISE & TEST FREQUENCY



https://tandem.app/report

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TIP #4

# Be a Great Host

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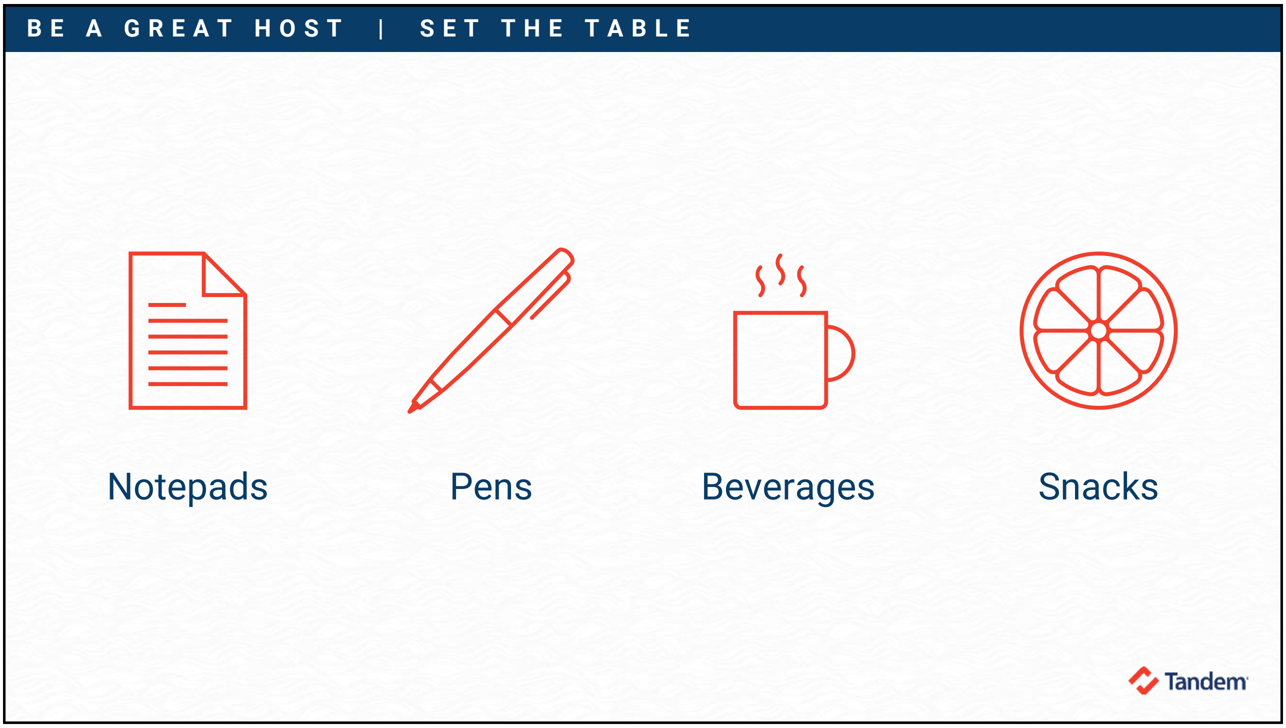

## BE A GREAT HOST | SET THE TABLE

Notepads

Pens

Beverages

Snacks

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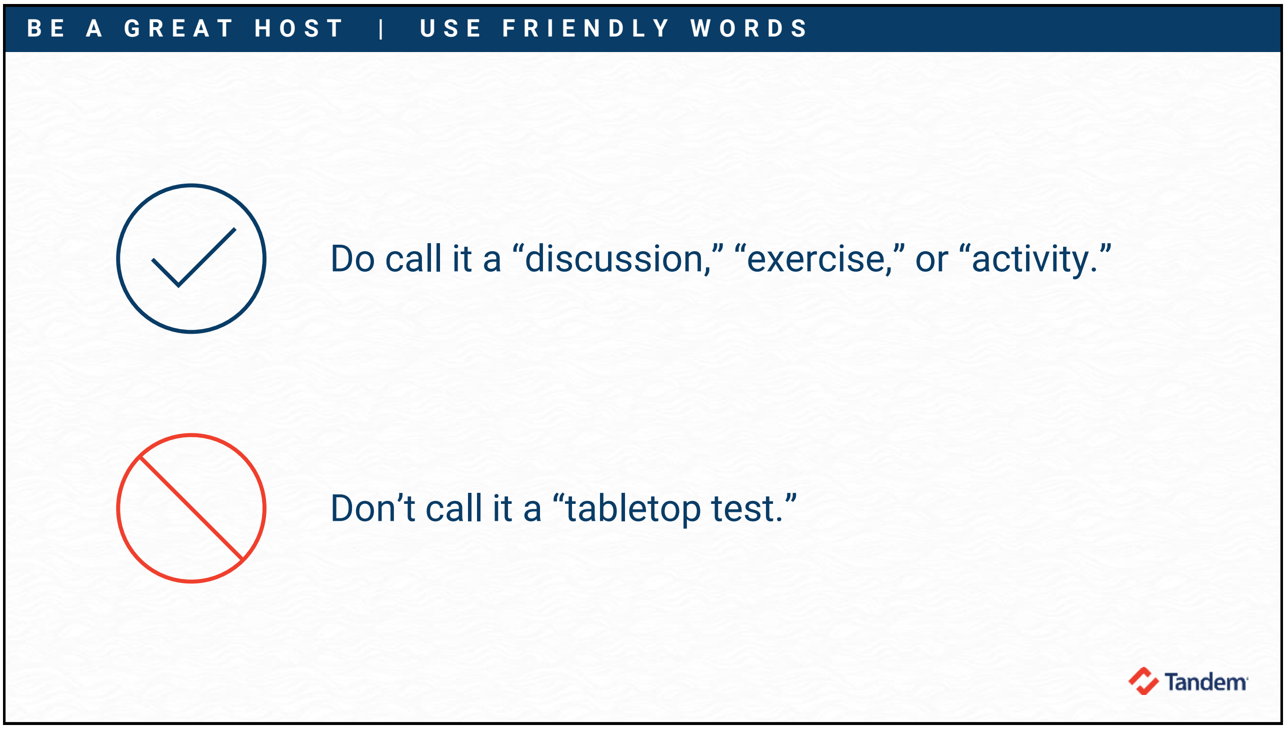

## BE A GREAT HOST | USE FRIENDLY WORDS

✓ Do call it a “discussion,” “exercise,” or “activity.”

🚫 Don’t call it a “tabletop test.”

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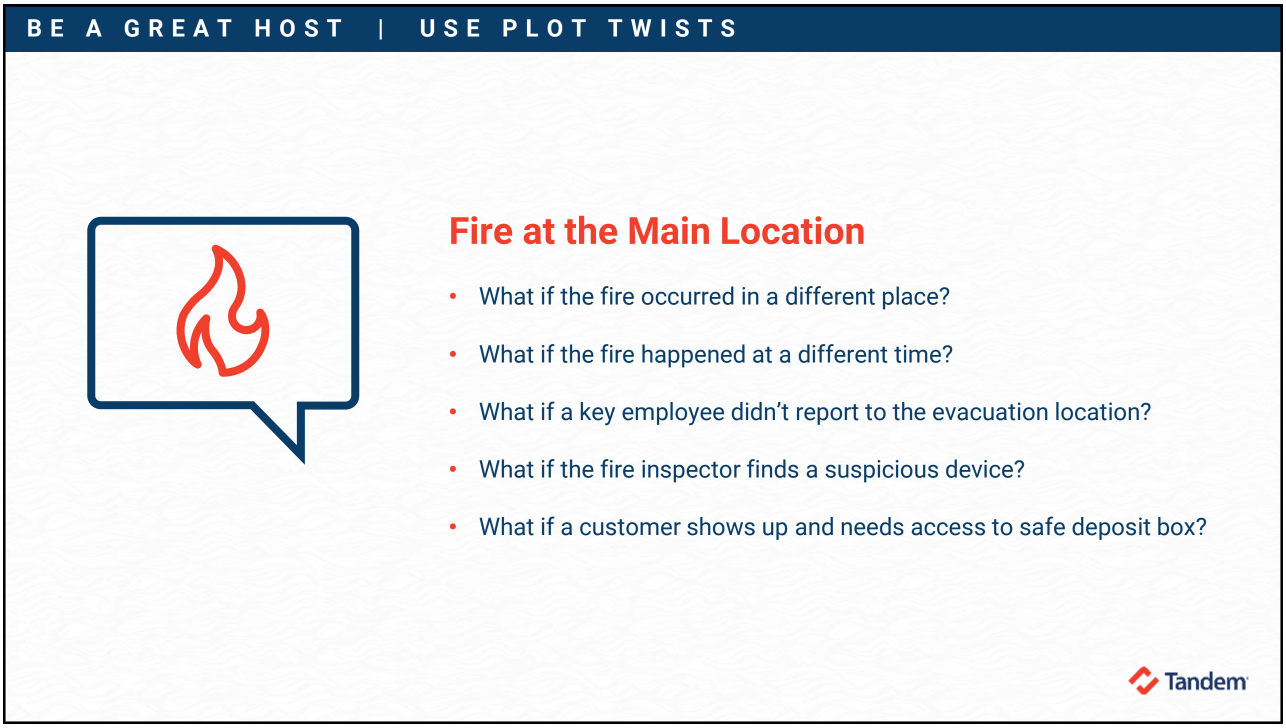

BE A GREAT HOST | USE PLOT TWISTS

## Fire at the Main Location

- What if the fire occurred in a different place?
- What if the fire happened at a different time?
- What if a key employee didn’t report to the evacuation location?
- What if the fire inspector finds a suspicious device?
- What if a customer shows up and needs access to safe deposit box?

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TIP #5

# Expect the Unexpected

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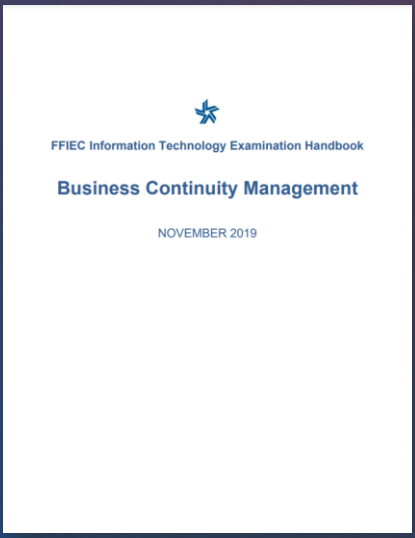
## FFIEC GUIDANCE

Features of a tabletop exercise may include the following: […]

- Role playing with simulated responses, critical steps, recognizing difficulties, and resolving problems.
- Clarifying critical plan elements, as well as problems noted during exercises.
- Creating action plans to correct issues.

https://ithandbook.ffiec.gov/it-booklets/business-continuity-management/vii-exercises-and-tests/viig-exercise-and-test-methods/viig3-tabletop-exercise



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## EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED | FOUR OUTCOMES

Potential Errors

Imperfect Results

Lessons Learned

Action Items

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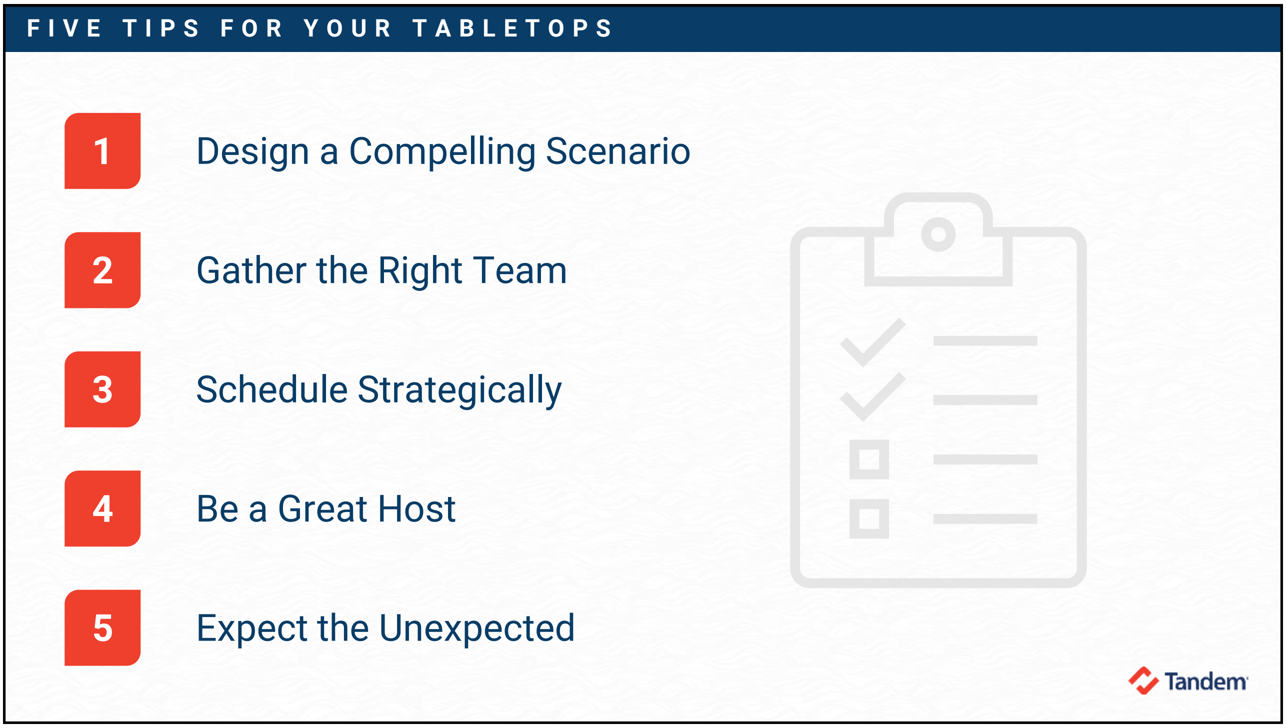

## FIVE TIPS FOR YOUR TABLETOPS

1. Design a Compelling Scenario
2. Gather the Right Team
3. Schedule Strategically
4. Be a Great Host
5. Expect the Unexpected

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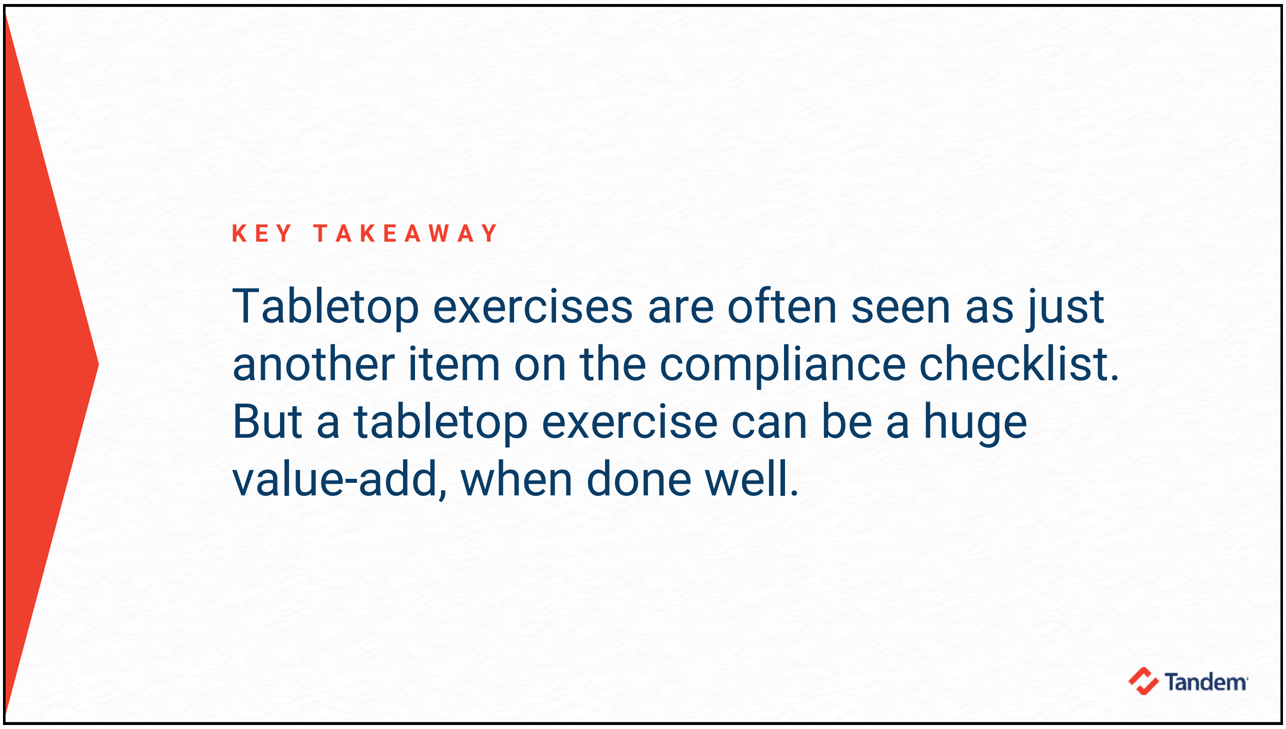

KEY TAKEAWAY

Tabletop exercises are often seen as just another item on the compliance checklist. But a tabletop exercise can be a huge value-add, when done well.

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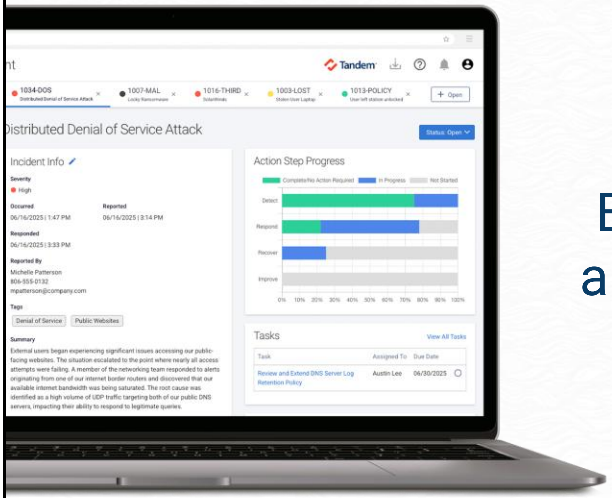

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1034-DOS Distributed Denial of Service Attack ×
1007-MAL Locky Ransomware ×
1016-THIRD SolarWinds ×
1003-LOST Stolen User Laptop ×
1013-POLICY User left station unlocked ×
+ Open

Distributed Denial of Service Attack

Status: Open

Incident Info

Severity
High

Occurred
06/16/2025 | 1:47 PM

Reported
06/16/2025 | 3:14 PM

Responded
06/16/2025 | 3:33 PM

Reported By
Michelle Patterson
806-555-0132
mpatterson@company.com

Tags
Denial of Service
Public Websites

Summary
External users began experiencing significant issues accessing our public-facing websites. The situation escalated to the point where nearly all access attempts were failing. A member of the networking team responded to alerts originating from one of our internet border routers and discovered that our available internet bandwidth was being saturated. The root cause was identified as a high volume of UDP traffic targeting both of our public DNS servers, impacting their ability to respond to legitimate queries.

Action Step Progress

Tasks

View All Tasks

| Task | Assigned To | Due Date | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Review and Extend DNS Server Log Retention Policy | Austin Lee | 06/30/2025 | ○ |

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SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS!

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# Tabletop Exercise

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BOOSTconsulting™

David Hernandez

Missy Oliver

Troy Sell

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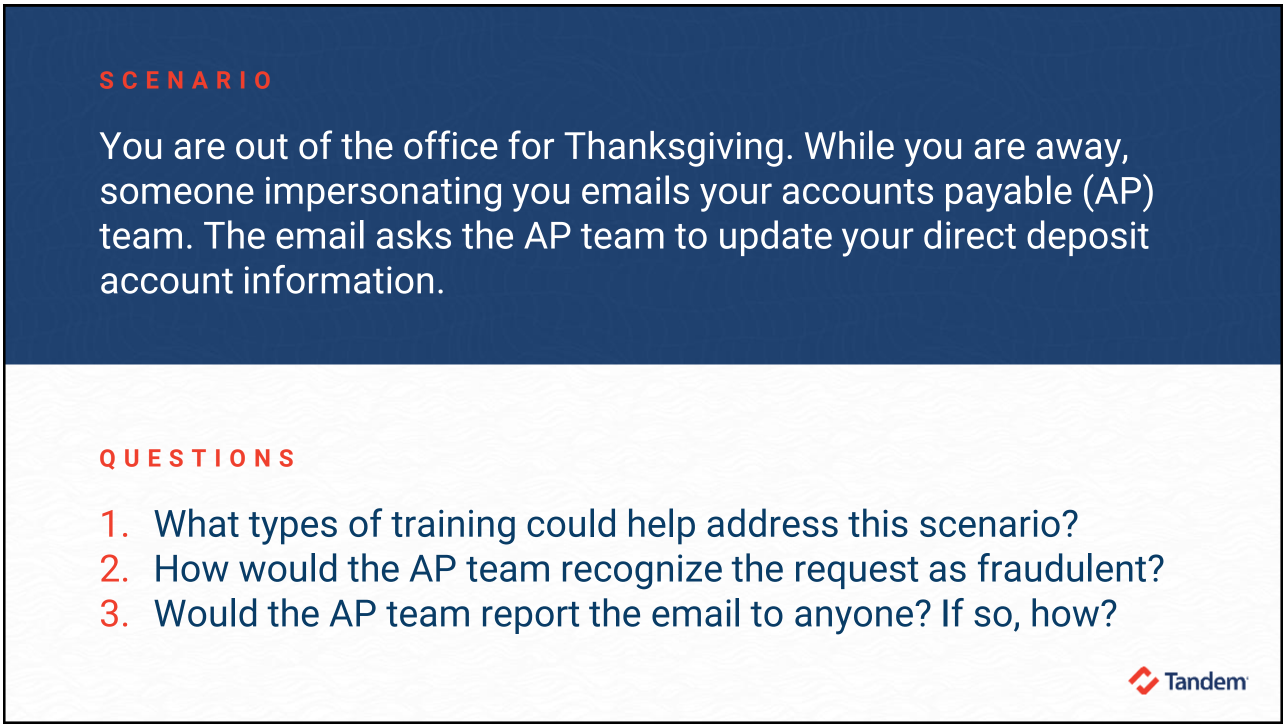

SCENARIO

You are out of the office for Thanksgiving. While you are away, someone impersonating you emails your accounts payable (AP) team. The email asks the AP team to update your direct deposit account information.

QUESTIONS

1. What types of training could help address this scenario?
2. How would the AP team recognize the request as fraudulent?
3. Would the AP team report the email to anyone? If so, how?

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PLOT TWIST!

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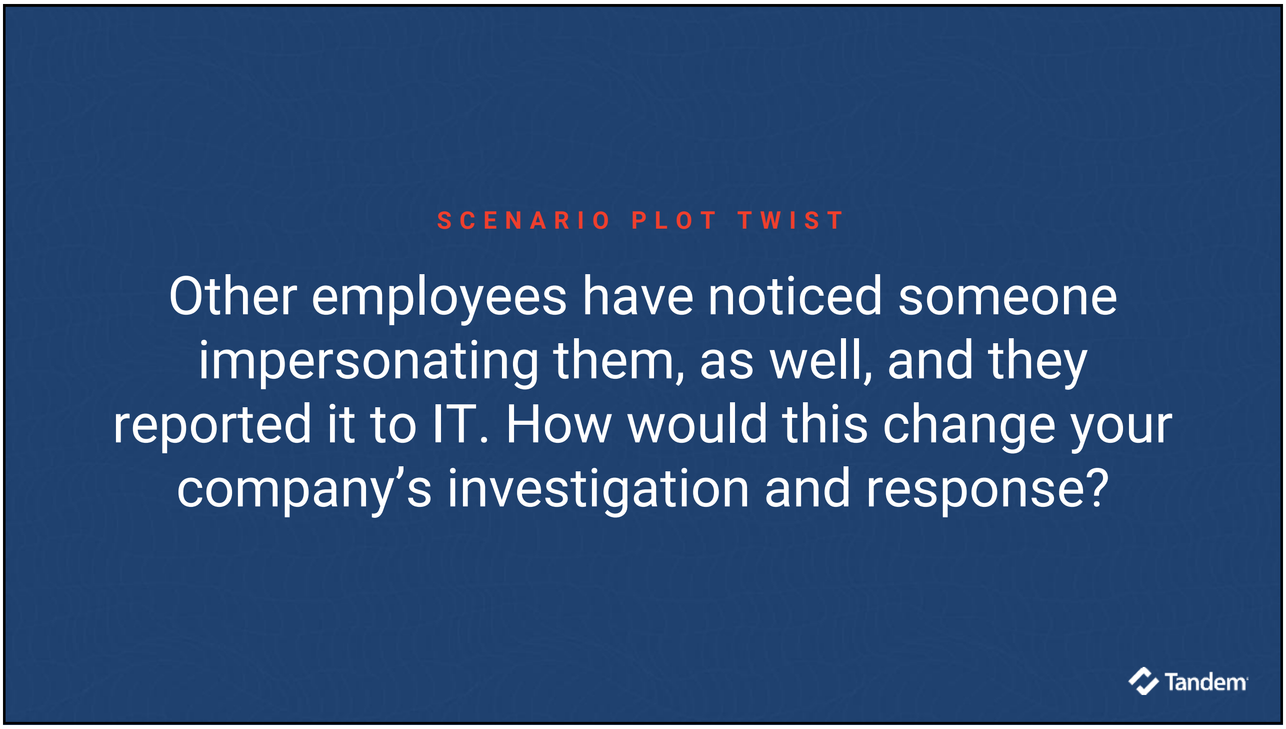

SCENARIO PLOT TWIST

Other employees have noticed someone impersonating them, as well, and they reported it to IT. How would this change your company’s investigation and response?

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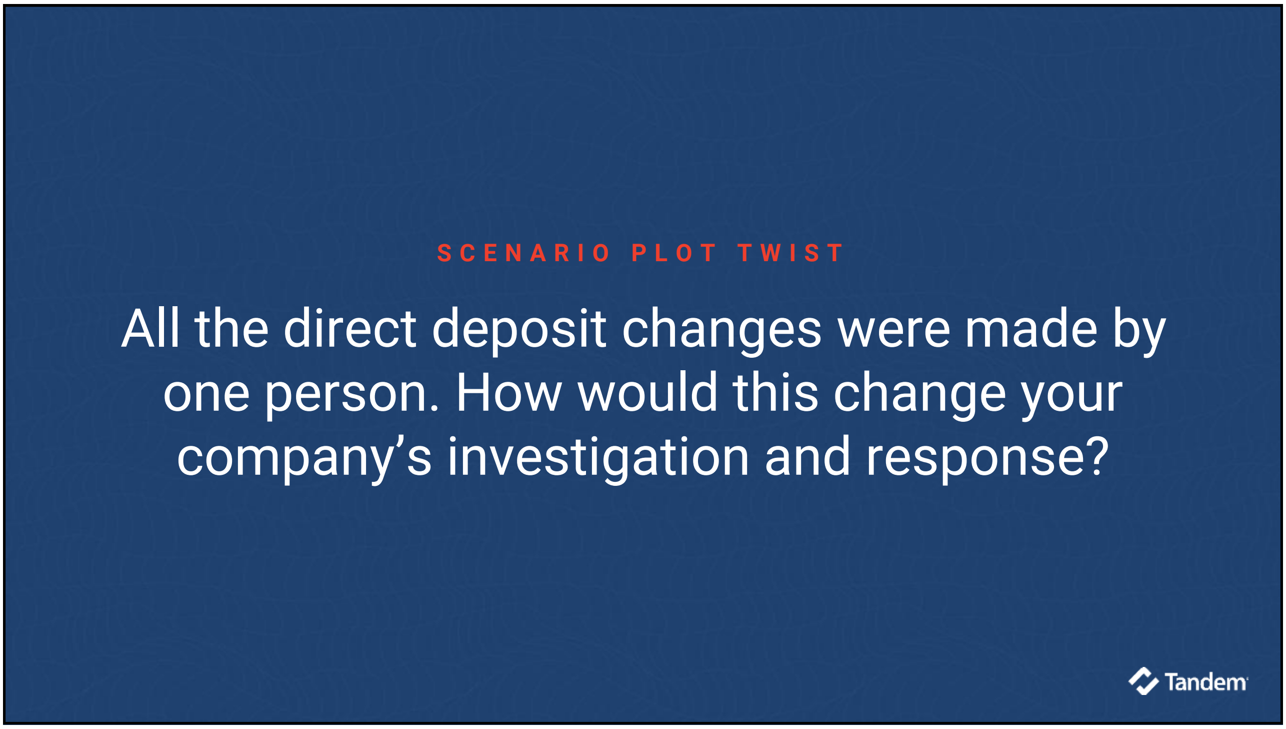

SCENARIO PLOT TWIST

All the direct deposit changes were made by one person. How would this change your company's investigation and response?

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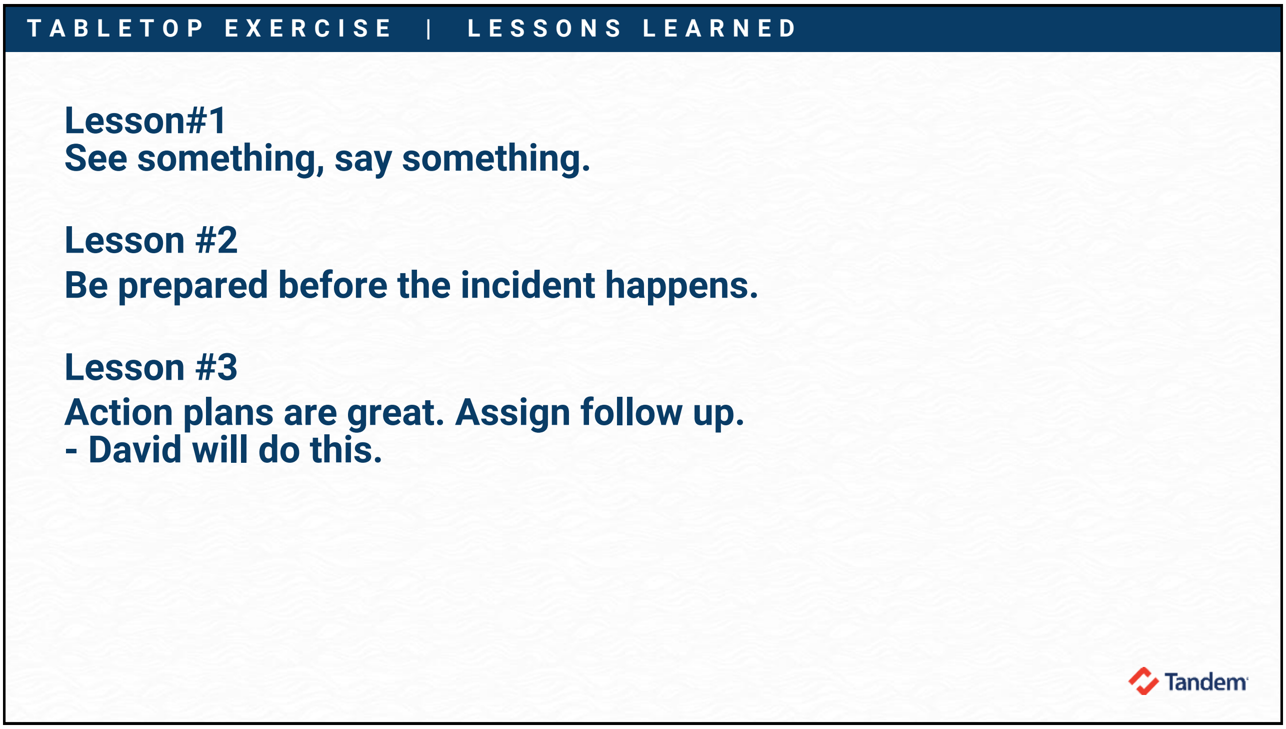

TABLETOP EXERCISE | LESSONS LEARNED

**Lesson#1**
**See something, say something.**

**Lesson #2**
**Be prepared before the incident happens.**

**Lesson #3**
**Action plans are great. Assign follow up.**
**- David will do this.**

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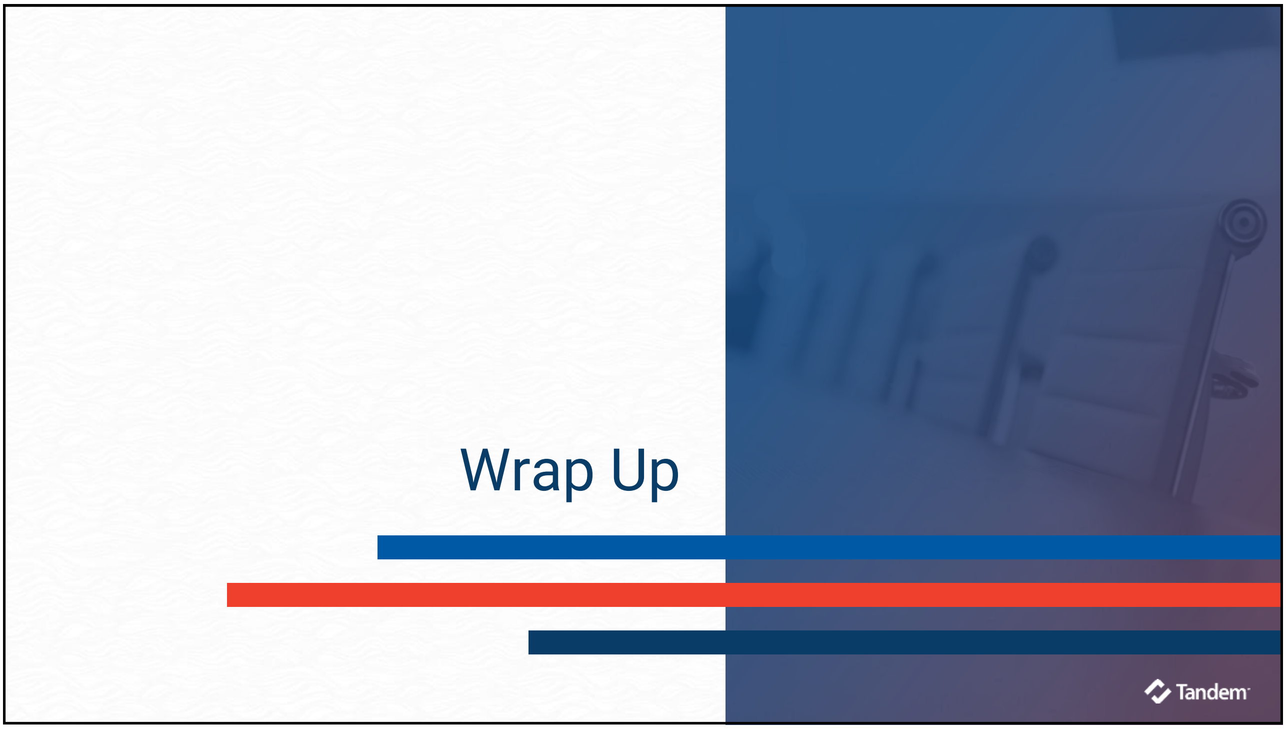

## Wrap Up

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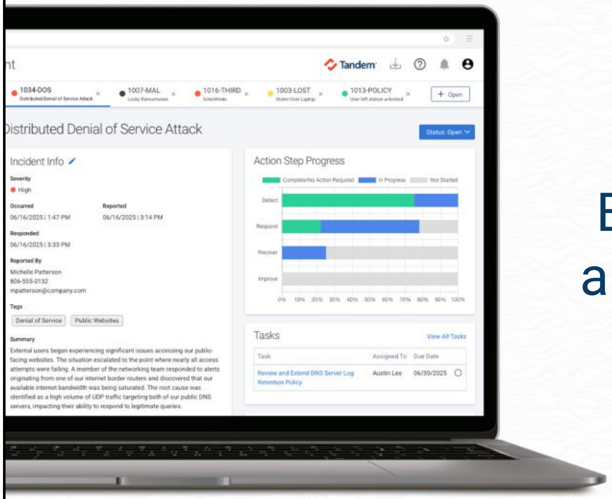

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# Get a Free Hat!

1. Fill out the survey.
2. Schedule a sales meeting.
3. Get a cool hat.

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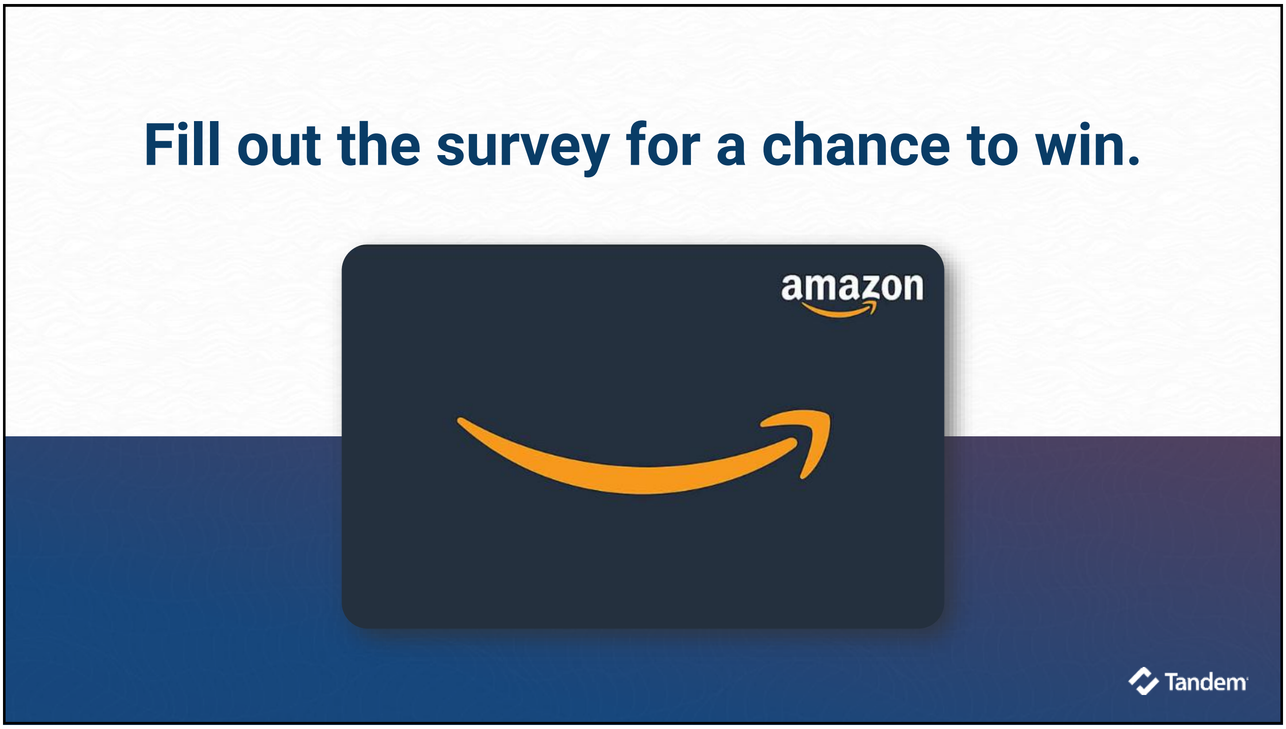

## Fill out the survey for a chance to win.

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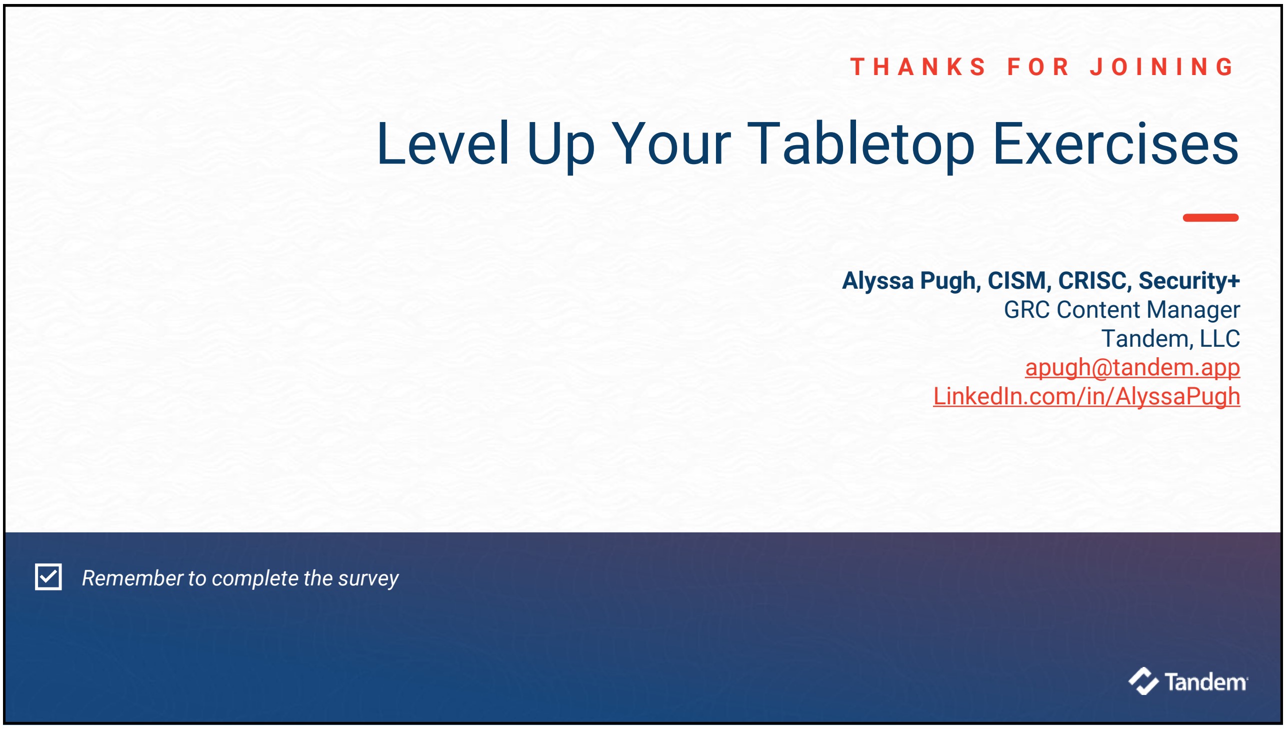

THANKS FOR JOINING

# Level Up Your Tabletop Exercises

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☑ *Remember to complete the survey*

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