10 Steps for Pressure Testing

Pressure testing is a leading-edge capability that helps agencies test the effectiveness of their fraud countermeasures using different testing methods. Your organisation can use 10 steps to start pressure testing. These steps are flexible, and can be adapted to best suit your needs.

1 **Prepare your organisation for the pressure testing**

Carry out fraud risk assessments, this will help to identify fraud risks and the countermeasures that are in place to mitigate such risks. You should then identify who should conduct the pressure test. This person should talk with other employees across the organisation as they will be the essential component in carrying out the pressure testing.

2 **Get buy-in from senior officials and stakeholders**

Pressure testing requires approval and resourcing. Build a strong narrative to help you get buy-in from key decision makers and the necessary support to start and/or continue pressure testing.

Getting approval is very important for pressure testing that involves more advanced methods, such as covert tests and helps protect employees undertaking the test from liability.

3 **Join the community**

If more organisations do pressure testing, then more organisations will be able to share information on vulnerabilities and best practice. The more agencies that conduct pressure testing, the greater the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other agencies and identify common vulnerabilities.

4 **Set up your pressure testing capability**

Some pressure testing activities, such as targeted assessments, can be done with minimal resources. The more you invest in pressure testing, the greater the return you will get. An organisation that has core templates for planning, communication, testing and reporting will find pressure testing easier and will be able to conduct pressure testing consistently.

5 **Choose areas to carry out pressure testing**

You can use investigations, risk assessments, employee feedback and/or audit findings to help identify which countermeasures, processes, programmes, functions or systems are suitable for pressure testing. When deciding what areas to pressure test, it is important to consider the potential benefit to your entity and whether there have been any other similar audits or tests recently conducted.

6 Choose your process

When your organisation first starts pressure testing, undertake targeted or critical assessments that focus on a small number of countermeasures using simple methodologies. As pressure testing maturity and capability builds, your organisation may want to conduct more comprehensive testing and use more advanced testing methodologies, such as covert testing.

7 Start your first pressure test

You will need to develop a pressure testing plan, outlining the proposed scope and methods. Your plan should consider the potential outcomes of the pressure test and who might be affected by them, this will help to manage risks and prepare relevant stakeholders.

You should begin pressure testing using simple methods that require less governance and resources to test the relevant countermeasures. Pressure testing using hands-off methods such as desktop reviews and workshops can be completed in less than a week.

8 Provide outcomes and recommendations

After you have finished your tests, you can develop comprehensive reports on pressure testing outcomes. Use a collaborative, co-design approach to come up with recommendations to treat any identified vulnerabilities in the countermeasures.

Pressure testing should be a collaborative project. It will work best when you work with stakeholders to identify and implement solutions.

9 Build your capability

You can use any results to inform and build capability for future pressure tests. Results from initial pressure tests may also lead to getting more buy-in and additional resources.

Starting small enables your organisation to ensure that its internal processes work effectively, and will help when moving to more hands-on methods. You can also refine governance and testing processes before moving on to comprehensive assessments and covert tests.

Building pressure testing into your organisation's fraud control plan can provide a clear reference for all officials on how pressure testing relates to your organisation's fraud control arrangements and priorities.

It might be useful to look back on any vulnerabilities identified in previous pressure tests.

10 Share your results

Sharing results from your pressure test helps your organisation and other public sector agencies. You will help other agencies improve their countermeasures and avoid duplication of effort, while learning from their experiences and expertise.