

What does it take to achieve the highest score in the world for the CISM exam?

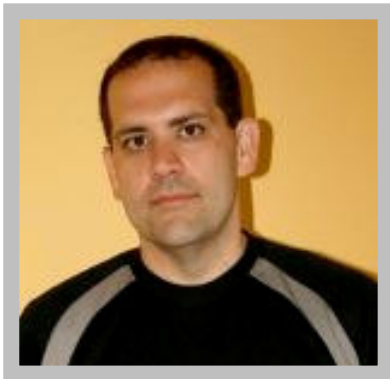
In order to find out, you have to first find that **one** individual who has, indeed, achieved the highest score in the world. Then you ask...

So we asked ISACA Ottawa Valley Chapter¹ member Ross Screamon, CISA, CISM, CISSP. You see, Ross was recognized by ISACA for achieving the **highest score in the world** on the June 2008 ISACA's *Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)* examination.

If I told you Ross was in his mid-thirties, a family man with five children under the age of nine and had about ten years' experience in IT security management, would you think I was kidding? Well think again!

Ross' path is, in some ways, not so different from yours or mine. Born in Toronto and raised there until he was 10, his family moved to Calgary in 1984 during the "boom years". In 2007 Ross and his own young family relocated to Ottawa. He describes it as "kind of a homecoming" to return to Ontario. Ross is currently consulting with the Bank of Canada.

His short but fascinating career to date has involved IT security design and architecture, where he "cut his teeth" on the design and management of Virtual Private Networks and firewall solutions. In 2001, he moved into the development of web applications for a small company that attracted numerous Fortune 500 clients. Some of these clients had pages upon pages of control requirements for the services being delivered. Clearly, security and privacy were paramount among these companies. So, with significant security experience already under his belt, Ross worked towards his CISSP² designation in 2004.



His work as a security consultant led Ross to **CobiT**³, since one of his enterprise clients had adopted CobiT as a framework for internal audit and governance. "CobiT helped me understand the *why* of security rather than the *how*," says Ross Screamon, "linking security controls to business objectives. It was a revelation for someone like myself that had solely worked within the confines of IT."

CobiT had sparked his interest in IT audit and assurance, which led Ross naturally to ISACA's *Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)* certification in 2006. Surprisingly this tact did not lead him into audit work but experience in enterprise security controls. Ross eventually organized the IT security function and found himself in security management. You know where this is leading, don't you? In 2008 Ross sat for the **CISM** exam and was recognized by ISACA for achieving the highest score in the world on the June 2008 CISM examination - amongst some of the very best and brightest CISM candidates around the globe!

When you're No. 1 in the world where do you pay homage? In his unassuming and modest manner Ross speaks about his first computer mentor, Bill Chestnut, who saw potential for great things in him "at a time when I was fairly aimless and uninspired. He got me interested in relational theory and database management systems." Of course, in recent times seeing him through the studying and the exams Ross gives much credit to his wife, Karolle, for being "amazingly patient".

While the certifications on the *curriculum vitae* will help land a job, Ross Screamon reminds potential CISA, CISM and CGEIT⁴ candidates that "it is the process of preparing for the certifications (that is, the work experience and real-world learning) which will keep you employed."

Arnie Francis, ISACA Ottawa Valley Chapter

¹ ISACA Ottawa Valley Chapter (<http://www.isaca-ottawa.ca>) of ISACA (<http://www.isaca.org>)

² (ISC)²'s Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) accreditation. (<http://www.isc2.org/>)

³ CobiT is ISACA's increasingly internationally accepted set of guidance materials for IT governance. (<http://www.isaca.org/cobit/>)

⁴ ISACA's *Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT*® (CGEIT®) accreditation.