



FOUNDERS OF THE FUTURE: CYBERSECURITY

Securing tomorrow, today

In this report, we spotlight early-stage cybersecurity leaders building for tomorrow's reality, not yesterday's assumptions.

FOUNDERS OF THE FUTURE

Cybersecurity is moving into a new era. AI is changing how software is written, how organisations operate, and how attackers scale. The result is a threat landscape that is faster, noisier, and more identity-driven than anything we've seen before. In that environment, the next breakout cyber companies won't win by shipping another point solution. They will reset categories. They will reduce complexity, restore context, and help security teams move quickly without increasing risk.

At Aspiron Search, we work alongside venture-backed cybersecurity founders as they build teams through these shifts. In this report, we spotlight early-stage cybersecurity leaders building for tomorrow's reality, not yesterday's assumptions.

THE MACRO THEMES SHAPING 2026

Across incident response, identity, risk prioritisation, and AI infrastructure, four themes keep showing up:

- **Prioritisation beats detection.** The problem is no longer visibility. It's deciding what matters first, with confidence.
- **Identity is the new control plane.** As non-human identities and AI agents explode, managing identity risk becomes the foundation for everything else.
- **AI accelerates both sides.** Defenders are better than ever, but speed has changed the game, and attackers are using automation too.
- **Enterprises need secure AI infrastructure.** It's not enough for agents to be powerful. They must be observable, governed, and safe to run at scale

SHARON ISAACI

Co-Founder & CEO

It was rarely the case that the incident started because of an unknown weakness. Organisations often knew about it, they just didn't understand its priority or context.

Before launching Tonic Security, Sharon Isaaci kept seeing the same pattern: incidents weren't caused by a lack of visibility, but by an overload of it. That frustration sparked Tonic, an AI-native platform that helps security teams reduce risk by cutting through noise and focusing on what matters.

THEIR POV

- Security teams don't need more alerts. They need context-driven prioritisation.
- The industry is shifting from reactive detection to proactive exposure management and efficient remediation.
- Reducing burnout is a security outcome, not just a wellbeing one.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Over the next few years, Sharon's vision is to establish Tonic as the lead player in agentic, context-driven exposure management, helping teams reduce risk while feeling happier and more efficient at work.

MURALI BASAVAIAH

Co-Founder & CEO

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Eighty percent of all breaches start with an identity issue. Most organisations don't lack security tools, they lack context. They don't know which identities are the highest risk.

For Murali Basavaiah, the path to founding Andromeda Security began long before the first line of code was written. After building and exiting Avi Networks (acquired by VMware), Murali saw a problem appearing again and again inside large enterprises: identity compromise.



Andromeda is focused on identity driven by context and control for the era of autonomous systems. As cloud usage grows, non-human identities multiply, and AI agents enter production environments, identity security becomes a critical line item for security leaders.

THEIR POV

- Identity security and AI governance are converging quickly.
- Attackers and defenders both have AI leverage now, raising the speed and sophistication of compromise.
- Explainability is non-negotiable when AI determines risk and access.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Over the next year, Murali's vision is clear: Andromeda becomes the trusted identity layer for autonomous systems, helping enterprises move fast while ensuring risk remains low.

ED BELLIS

Co-Founder & CEO

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We could predict what would be exploited on the internet. Customers wanted to know what mattered for them.

Years of building Kenna taught Ed Bellis a recurring lesson from mature security teams: global risk scores are useful, but without environmental context, prioritisation fails. Empirical Security answers that context gap with customer-specific models.

Using modern MLOps stacks and each client's own telemetry, Empirical builds a unique model per customer that prioritises the issues that truly drive business impact in their estate.



THEIR POV

- Risk scoring only matters if it reflects your environment.
- AI should compress noise into a decision, not add another dashboard.
- The market shift is about speed. More code, more automation, more exposure, for everyone.

EMPIRICAL

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ed sees a landscape where defence is improving, but everything is moving faster. Empirical is built for that reality, helping security leaders focus on the few issues that actually change outcomes.

ANDREW BERMAN

Co-Founder & CEO

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The problem resonated. We'd built the product, built the team - it was the natural moment to emerge



Andrew's path to Runlayer is shaped by years of building at the intersection of deep tech and complex systems. His first company, Nanit, scaled to millions of users. Another venture was acquired by Zapier, where he worked closely with Frontier Labs on early tooling, AI Actions, custom GPTs, and the first remote MCP server. That experience revealed a clear pattern: LLMs were improving fast, but the tools and infrastructure required for agents to perform real work didn't exist.

Runlayer is building an enterprise-ready MCP control plane with authentication, observability, and guardrails integrated directly into agent workflows, accelerating AI adoption without restricting it.

THEIR POV

- If attackers can automate sophisticated operations, enterprises must be able to automate securely too.
- Production AI requires resilience and design for volatility.
- Winning AI infrastructure categories means staying focused on today's wedge while tracking where the market is heading.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Andrew brings rare credibility, having shipped production AI to millions and built foundational tooling alongside Frontier Labs. As enterprises move from experimentation to automation, Runlayer is building the layer that will help teams prioritise, execute, and scale what matters most, securely and with confidence.

Contact Us

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions, or are looking to hire, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Who are **Aspiron Search**?

A niche-focused cybersecurity search firm partnering exclusively with venture-backed, early-stage security vendors to place top talent globally.

Aspiron is a growth multiplier for startups through Search and Ventures, enabling us to add value at every stage of your growth journey.

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