WHITEPAPER

Zero Trust Maturity Model 2026

A practical framework for assessing and accelerating zero-trust adoption across enterprise environments — from identity to workloads, cloud to on-premises.

68%	$4.9M	277
of breaches involve human element	average cost of a data breach	days average breach detection

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Executive Summary

The perimeter is gone. Remote workforces, multi-cloud architectures, SaaS sprawl, and increasingly sophisticated supply chain attacks have rendered traditional network-centric security models obsolete. Zero trust — the principle that no user, device, or workload should be implicitly trusted — has become the strategic foundation for modern enterprise security programmes.

Yet most organisations struggle to translate the zero trust philosophy into a concrete, measurable implementation roadmap. This whitepaper provides a practical maturity model across five core pillars, enabling security leaders to assess their current posture, identify gaps, and prioritise investments that deliver measurable risk reduction.

> *"Zero trust is not a product you buy — it is an architecture you build, iteratively, aligned to the threats that matter most to your organisation."*

The Five Pillars of Zero Trust

Our maturity model organises zero trust capabilities into five interdependent pillars. Each pillar has four maturity levels: Traditional, Initial, Advanced, and Optimal.

1. Identity

Identity is the new perimeter. Every access decision begins with strong, verified identity — not network location. Mature identity programmes enforce multi-factor authentication universally, implement risk-based conditional access, and continuously validate session trust.

> *Mellivor deployment: Securden provides enterprise privileged access management that enforces least-privilege across Active Directory environments, while Beyond Guard delivers continuous zero-trust verification and real-time threat response across the entire identity fabric.*

2. Devices & Endpoints

Every device connecting to enterprise resources must be identified, inventoried, and assessed for security posture before access is granted. Endpoint health — patch status, configuration compliance, and threat indicators — becomes a real-time access decision input.

> *Mellivor deployment: Cybereason XDR provides operation-centric threat detection across endpoints, networks, and cloud workloads, while Cynox detects leaked and compromised credentials across Active Directory in real time, blocking credential-based attacks before they escalate.*

3. Networks

Micro-segmentation replaces flat networks. East-west traffic is inspected and controlled with the same rigour as north-south traffic. Network access is granted per-session, per-resource, based on

identity, device health, and behavioural context.

> *Mellivor deployment: Gatewatcher NDR provides deep visibility into network traffic to detect advanced threats evading perimeter controls, and Threater DNS operationalises threat intelligence at the network layer, blocking billions of malicious connections in real time.*

4. Applications & Workloads

Applications enforce their own trust boundaries. API surfaces are secured across the full lifecycle. Cloud workloads are segmented and monitored. Application-layer controls validate every request regardless of originating network.

> *Mellivor deployment: 42Crunch secures APIs from design through production, Wallarm provides real-time application protection and API discovery, and SURF Security addresses the browser as a critical attack surface for credential theft.*

5. Data

Data classification, encryption, and access controls follow the data itself — not the container it sits in. Data loss prevention extends across endpoints, cloud storage, email, and collaboration platforms. Sensitive data is continuously discovered and monitored.

> *Mellivor deployment: Transfer Chain delivers zero-knowledge encrypted file transfer for enterprise data sharing, while Cyberserval provides on-premises data detection and response with full DLP capabilities without sending sensitive data to the cloud.*

Maturity Assessment Matrix

Use this matrix to assess your organisation's current zero trust maturity across each pillar. Score each pillar from 1 (Traditional) to 4 (Optimal) to identify priority investment areas.

Pillar	Traditional (1)	Initial (2)	Advanced (3)	Optimal (4)
Identity	Passwords only, no MFA	MFA on critical apps	Risk-based conditional access	Continuous identity verification
Devices	No inventory, no posture checks	Basic MDM enrolled	Real-time posture assessment	Automated quarantine on drift
Networks	Flat network, VPN-only	Basic segmentation	Micro-segmentation deployed	Per-session, per-resource access
Applications	Perimeter-only protection	WAF on public apps	API security lifecycle	Zero-trust app mesh
Data	No classification	Manual classification	Automated DLP policies	Data-centric access control

Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1: Foundation (Months 1–3)

- Complete identity and asset inventory across all environments
- Deploy MFA universally — prioritise privileged accounts and critical applications
- Establish baseline network segmentation between trust zones
- Audit existing API surfaces and web-facing applications

Phase 2: Acceleration (Months 4–9)

- Implement risk-based conditional access and session trust scoring
- Deploy endpoint detection and response across all managed devices
- Integrate threat intelligence feeds into network and DNS-layer controls
- Begin automated data classification and DLP policy enforcement

Phase 3: Optimisation (Months 10–18)

- Achieve micro-segmentation across production workloads
- Implement continuous identity and device posture verification
- Deploy deception technology to detect lateral movement

- Establish continuous compliance monitoring and automated reporting

Ready to build your security programme?

Mellivor works with 20+ specialist cybersecurity vendors across 12 security domains. Our advisory team can map the right technologies to your risk profile, compliance requirements, and operational environment — from initial assessment through deployment and ongoing optimisation.

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