



Shift Your Security Testing Strategy

From Reactive Tactics to a Proactive Program:
Comparing Ad Hoc vs. Programmatic Pentesting

! The Old Way: Ad Hoc

A collection of separate, uncoordinated activities, often driven by compliance deadlines rather than a holistic security strategy.

- **Reactive and Infrequent:** Typically performed annually or semi-annually. Static reports become binder-ware and quickly go out of date.
- **Compliance-Driven:** The primary goal is often to check a box for an audit, not to build a resilient security posture.
- **Siloed Picture of Risk:** Fails to provide a cohesive view of an organization's security, leaving significant gaps.

✓ The New Way: Programmatic

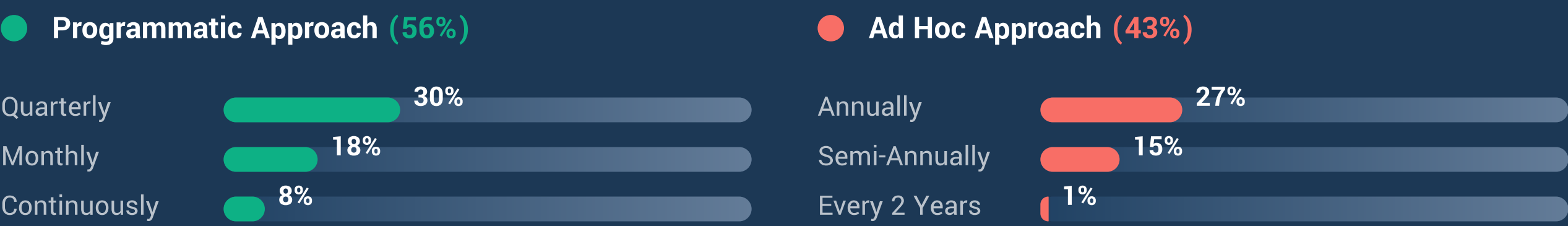
A centrally managed system that orchestrates multiple validation tactics in a continuous, predictable rhythm aligned with business goals.

- **Proactive and Continuous:** A testing calendar is aligned with development sprints, with at least quarterly testing cadence.
- **Strategy-Driven:** The goal is to validate every layer of defense, reduce real-world risk, and enable faster, more secure product releases.
- **Integrated System:** Delivers a holistic view of security posture, enabling smarter prioritization and resource allocation.

The Data Tells the Story

While **56% of organizations** have adopted a programmatic approach (testing quarterly or more), a significant **43% still follow an ad hoc model**, testing twice a year or less, leaving long windows of exposure. Leading the pack are the 8% of organizations who pentest continuously.

How Often Do Organizations Conduct Pentests?



Source: Cobalt State of Pentesting Report 2025

The Resolution Gap: Where Programs Prove Their Worth



Source: Cobalt State of Pentesting Report 2025

The Financial Impact of a Programmatic Approach

Shifting to a programmatic model (like pentesting as a service) delivers a clear return on investment.

176%

Return on investment (ROI)
per pentest engagement.

53%

Lower total cost for pentesting
compared to traditional models.

Source: Analyzing the Economic Benefits of Cobalt's Pentesting as a Service (PTaaS) Model, ESG

Ready to Build Your Program?

Get the blueprint for building a modern
offensive security program.

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