



Implementing Commercial Security

State-of-the-art solution should start with a well-trained staff

By Jim Geyer

Commercial buildings face a universal challenge: how to manage security without encroaching on tenant privacy, comfort and experience. Safeguarding tenants requires a multi-pronged security program that starts with a well-trained staff and includes security professionals, closed circuit television systems, access control, appropriate lighting and landscaping that ensures the identification and prevention of crime.

A security event can do considerable harm to a building's reputation. When it comes to commercial property security, property owners and managers have to control the cost of services, provide good customer service to enhance tenant satisfaction and reduce vacancies, and make sure they are keeping their tenants and visitors safe.

More of today's commercial buildings employ networked "smart" technology that manages access to a facility via access control, monitored alarms, and a video management system

(CCTV). Whether it is a large commercial facility or a mid-sized office building, a state-of-the-art integrated security solution in conjunction with a professional uniformed guarding service can ensure a higher level of security.

Facility managers need to artfully juggle providing discreet security for their tenants while ensuring that their experience in the building is pleasurable and worry-free. Tenants and visitors require a high level of trust in the establishments where they are conducting business. Safety and security are a crucial component of today's highly mobile culture. The goal for a security services company is to ensure the safety and security of its tenants, staff and visitors, while enhancing the building brand experience and building tenant loyalty:

Welcome and protect. The key to building security is finding a balance that fosters an inviting atmosphere for tenants, staff and visitors while ensuring safety and security. For example, presenting security personnel in a customer service role, with the security

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professionals dressed in suits rather than the traditional military style, makes for a more accessible presence.

This security-minded ambassador provides an increased level of customer service in addition to security protection to both welcome and protect tenants, staff and visitors. Security professionals should provide concierge-level customer service to tenants and visitors professionals that is specifically selected and trained for the building’s unique environment which includes:

- Specialized training modules in First Aid/CPR/AED and ADA Compliance
- Fire/Life Safety training
- Emergency and active shooter preparedness training
- Lobby ambassadors specially trained in concierge-level customer service
- Law enforcement liaison services

Control access. During off-hours, security professionals should be posted at the front entrance and at any other access point to the property to greet anyone who is entering the property and to act as a deterrent and barrier for people who have no business in the building. It is important for facility managers to train all employees and contractors to maintain key control, restrict access to tenants and registered visitors only, report suspicious activity, conduct routine property tours to access all security and fire hazards and protect all tenant, staff and visitor information from outsiders.

Patrol public areas. Ensuring that Video Management Systems with recording equipment are tracking all of the facility’s public areas is important. These public areas include reception desk, parking lot, shipping and receiving dock and lobby. Video Management Systems should be actively monitored by security staff or via a state-of-the-art monitoring facility.

Commit to continual training. Ensuring that security professionals have access to virtual and classroom training programs delivers officers that are well-versed on the latest security technology available. Today’s security workforce spans all generations. Optimal learning strategies and techniques generally vary considerably when training a 20-something vs. a 60-something and there is no one-size-fits-all training. People are the primary “currency” of the physical security industry and the best security services companies are the ones that provide well-trained security professionals who can strive and succeed.

Training employees on the latest integrated security systems as well as operating and emergency evacuation procedures are vital components of the security professional’s continual learning. For example, the building’s training should include joint programs with security and employees for emergency procedures during evacuations. Integrated security protocols enhance the overall building security program resulting in a seamless security operation that can adapt to change in real time.

Develop public/private initiatives. Establish public-private programs that further the coordination and communication of po-

lice, fire department, and emergency services and private security in the protection of people and property helps to enhance the safety and security of the commercial real estate community.

From an operational standpoint, it is vital for building management to have cooperation between all primary public and private sectors. For example, police officers appreciate the role that building security professionals play as they are an extra set of eyes to share observations and monitor trends. Police officers, in turn, can communicate with security personnel about possible threats in the area, and give them photos of wanted individuals.

Police agencies can also organize training sessions for private security to help them understand the ways they can assist public law enforcement when securing buildings. Using two-way communication in a variety of methods can enhance mutual respect and support collaboration between private and public sectors. Security teams can also partner with Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA). As an active member in BOMA, the building security team has access to a comprehensive resource for security best practices and benefits from the research, standards and information offered through this organization.

Prepare for emergencies. Whether dealing with a natural disaster, loss of electrical power or an act of terrorism, every commercial building has to be prepared for emergencies that can happen at any time of the day or night. The emergency preparedness plan should address all tenant, staff and visitor safeguards, best practices and training, and all moving parts of operating a commercial building. The development of an emergency plan should account for individual property needs, geography, occupancy type, traffic, nearby businesses and a host of factors such as rate and type of security incidents, local crime rates, and access controls.

Commercial buildings are held to a high standard with regard to safety and security. It is critical that security procedures and staff training for all traffic areas of the building, including the lobby, front desk, baggage storage area, visitor entry points and the parking lot and receiving dock areas be intensive and comprehensive for contract security and building staff.

A commercial building with an open environment welcomes guests but also carries all of the risks associated with open access. A building’s hospitable open doors can allow access to people under the influence of drugs or alcohol, thieves, and disruptive and unruly people. Tenants and visitors expect to be safe when they are in a commercial building, and it is important that all public spaces be monitored by employees and security staff.

Each commercial building, which are all unique based on their location, facility design and tenant/visitor profile, needs a comprehensive security plan that is designed around the functional areas of the building. Heavily trafficked areas such as lobbies, parking lots, hallways, elevator access paths and meeting rooms need to be monitored and patrolled around the clock to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all tenants, visitors and staff.

Aligning with a private security company can help a building manager create a highly effective security program lead by well-trained, experienced security professionals.

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