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LAW FOR STAFF, 07/08/2009

Despite security staff dealing with criminality on a daily basis, and being obliged to operate within the constraints of the law at all times, the awkward truth is that many in the industry have little more than a very basic understanding of the law. Recognising this discrepancy, Shop Direct Group (SDG), in partnership with Advance Security, has responded with the creation of a nationally accredited training course in 'Criminal Law for Security Staff'.

The idea of SDG northern regional operations manager (and former CID officer) Ron Peel, the course is believed to be the very first of its kind in the industry.

Designed to bring security officers, supervisors and managers up to speed with the day to day realities of criminal law, the course looks at the various statutory acts and numerous legal definitions enshrined in criminal law. Additionally, training is provided on crime scene protection and management, the handling of exhibits, statement compilation, evidence gathering, dealing with suspects, interview techniques and the preparation and presentation of meaningful reports.

Relationships

The course was originally intended to provide short one-to-one sessions on criminal law to interested in-house security supervisors, helping those security professionals on the ground build confidence when dealing with any incidents or occurrences on site. However, with demand soon outstripping supply, the course was further developed to run over a 12-month period, meeting the needs of both SDG security supervisors and Advance security staff assigned to the SDG contract.

Recognising the potential of the emerging course, SDG national security training and development manager, Gary Summersgill, who has responsibility for the training needs of the Advance security staff employed by SDG, recommended the course for accreditation by examining and awarding body Edexcel.

Working together Ron and Gary developed the course submission documents, and as a direct result of SDG's professional association with Advance, and its long standing training partnership with Senate Security Training Ltd, this was established as an Edexcel Accredited Level 2 Award in October 2008.

In its pilot year, 20 site supervisors underwent the criminal law course, with a further 40 delegates confirmed for 2009. Indeed the course has proven so successful that an abridged 'taster' version has been developed, and undertaken by the entire Advance senior management team, with those officers who can't be accommodated this year due to the high level of interest, set to sit the shorter course as an interim measure.

With further plans in the pipeline to introduce a more advanced Criminal Law qualification as soon as possible, the course aims to significantly increase the knowledge base of security staff at all levels.

Ron says: "Despite basic job training calling on officers to familiarise themselves with the workings of the law, a lack of formal training means that in reality the subject is given little more than lip-service. With security officers often the first to arrive at a crime scene, it's vital that they are able to identify offences and have the ability to professionally deal with circumstances as they happen and develop.

"The Criminal Law for Security Staff course was developed in direct response to this discrepancy, and the high take up rate proves that there is a real demand for such knowledge within the industry."

Indeed with security officers becoming increasingly subject to legislation such as The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), it seems obvious that officers would require a full understanding of such Acts and how they impact on their ability to do their job. Unfortunately however the reality doesn't always match. What's more, with a lack of training on how to preserve a crime scene or handle exhibits, valuable evidence risks becoming corrupted or lost, negatively impacting on the ability to take action through the courts or via internal disciplinary procedures."

Law aware

With an assortment of acts and legal definitions in operation, the law can appear both complex and daunting, with many in the industry unaware of the actual nature of the crimes they strive to prevent. How many officers (not to mention security managers) for example, know that if an assailant was to threaten a mother with harm to her sleeping baby if she refused to hand over her handbag, that the crime would be blackmail, whereas if the threat was made to her personally it would be robbery? And how many could tell you why?

Addressing this confusion head on, Ron uses his 44 years' investigative experience to deliver a course that is based on scenarios, discussions and debates - demonstrating just how criminal law works in practice. By using real examples drawn from his extensive experience with the force, often from some of the most serious crimes of their day, the course is both engaging, and of real value to the officers who take part.

And not one to rest on his laurels, Ron is already planning to develop the course further, bringing in 'real life' incidents with strategically placed evidence to bring extra engagement to the course. Plans are to include a magistrate, mock courts, and a lawyer to conduct cross examinations. With video and telephone conferencing and a DVD offered for those who would have difficulty travelling to the sessions the course has been developed to be easily accessible to all involved.

Addressing training gaps

Certainly, Advance managing director Richard Bailey, believes that training is key when it comes to improving standards across the industry and promoting security as a genuine career choice. He says: "As security professionals we simply can't rest on our laurels and where there are identifiable training gaps it's paramount we fill them. Already taking the lead when it comes to the development of sector specific qualifications (such as our BTEC for the Defence Industry) the lessons learned from the SDG Criminal Law for Security Staff have already resulted in positive feedback from both the emergency services and the customer, and there is no doubt that our partnership with SDG has been further strengthened as part of this initiative.

"Changes in the industry over recent years, including licensing, have helped improve our professional standing, but there is still more to do. As such, I believe that efforts like Ron's can't be underestimated and he deserves special recognition for his part in driving the industry forward. With increased training opportunities central to the development of raising standards across our sector, we simply can't be afraid to face up to our shortfalls and take real steps to fill them wherever possible."

Notes



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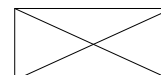


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The SDG Criminal Law for Security Staff course covers all aspects of criminal law including:

- Σ An in depth study of the Theft Act 1968, the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, the Criminal Damage Act 1972 and the Fraud Act 2006
- Σ Trespass, its civil standing and how and when it moves to a criminal offence
- Σ Breach of the Peace
- Σ Correct definitions (i.e. burglary, theft, robbery etc)
- Σ Criminal attempts, assisting offenders, conducting interviews, interview techniques, report writing and statement preparation
- Σ Protection of crime scenes, handling of exhibits
- Σ The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 and accompanying codes of practice.

Source: <http://www.advancesecurity.co.uk>

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