

A little advice does go a very long way

SIR – WITHIN THE SECURITY INDUSTRY there's a group of people who are collectively known as consultants. They're experienced in the methods of deterring and detecting crime as most of them have had careers in the Armed Services, the police service or within the insurance sector.

Despite their experience and expertise, the advice of consultants is often bypassed at a time when businesses may be making major decisions in respect of their security. Consultants don't come cheap, but will often more than justify their fees by steering a client in the right direction.

In addition to ensuring that the best possible security solution is identified, there's every likelihood that money can be saved on both the initial purchase of any equipment and its lifecycle.

Let's examine a typical example to prove the point. The client is a motor dealership. Customer vehicles in for repairs were being vandalised, while spare wheels on 4x4s and sets of alloy wheels from prestige vehicles were being stolen. Aside from the cost of replacements, goodwill was being lost with clients who were seriously inconvenienced by these thefts.

The client's initial reaction was to install a CCTV system. Three separate installers all quoted a price in the region of £30,000. The installers did what was asked of them, but none spent more than a short while on site and/or suggested an alternative solution to a CCTV system. Somewhat shocked by the price of the proposed surveillance set-up, the client called in a consultant to offer an opinion on the specification of the CCTV solution quoted for.

It was immediately apparent to the consultant that the CCTV solution had absolutely no chance of achieving the client's objectives in a cost-effective fashion. The site's perimeter fencing was part chain-

linked and part low-level walling, all of which was in a poor state of repair and, as a direct result, couldn't act as any sort of sustainable barrier to intrusion.

The consultant's advice was that, before spending money on expensive CCTV hardware, the client ought to rethink perimeter protection in terms of using palisade fencing. If not, the CCTV system would be constantly capturing video of incidents, many of which would subsequently prove to be false alarms. Bearing in mind that the police lose interest after unidentifiable incidents are reported, it was apparent the CCTV system would soon become ineffective.

The first priority, therefore, was to secure the premises (with three metre-high palisade fencing). The cost of securing the entire perimeter of the site in this way was estimated at £15,000. Subsequently, this solution has kept at bay the young vandals and small time criminals who, presumably, have moved on to newer, 'softer' targets. The client has since upgraded the site's CCTV system, albeit with a more appropriate specification, while the combined provision of fencing and out-of-hours monitoring has solved the customer's problems. The total cost of the whole project? £33,000.

In a nutshell, a little bit of salient advice at the right time will go a long way towards ensuring that end users don't suffer from 'Buyer's Remorse' further down the line.

■ Jim Gannon
Business Development Director
Unipart Security Solutions

Green business has to be good business

SIR – I'M EXTREMELY ENCOURAGED TO SEE that the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) debate and agenda has been taken up by other industry professionals such as Wilson Chowdhry of AA Security ('Secure future for posterity', Guarding Watch, SMT, January 2008,

p54) and Abbey Petkar at Magenta Security Services ('That lighter shade of green', Guarding Watch, SMT, September 2007, p53).

In my previous contribution to SMT ('Responsible philosophy', Guarding Watch, SMT, August 2007, p50), I commented that very few security organisations were taking the subject seriously, even though the benefits are so obvious. Thus it's very refreshing to see other companies grasping the issue with such tangible passion and determination.

However, I'd like to pose this question: "How can the rest of the industry learn to deliver on CSR commitments?"

Though the introduction of our own progressive CSR policy was an ethical business decision, we also realise the benefits to the company. Through a variety of staff initiatives, our workforce is motivated and our people feel like they 'belong' with the company, rather than simply being another cog in a corporate machine. By providing genuine opportunities to progress through hard work and aptitude, Advance Security allows personnel to see for themselves that they have a clear career path. They apply themselves accordingly.

In addition, a variety of benefits that we've introduced for our staff show that we care about their welfare and professional progression. Those benefits have invigorated the workforce because they now recognise that management has their needs and wishes at the heart of the business philosophy.

It's only by looking after members of staff in this fashion that the company can expect the best from them and, as a result, provide clients with the very highest quality security service.

However, CSR is about much more than just staff motivation. The preservation of the environment by way of lowering carbon emissions and recycling waste is an integral element of many modern CSR plans. How, though, does this impact on Advance Security as a business, as it surely carries added expense? In fact, it needn't do so.

In truth, we are simply aligning ourselves with the standards and values of the industries we serve. They look at their security provider to see if their own standards of environmental care are reflected. We do the same with our suppliers – from uniform and stationery providers through to office furniture and vehicle manufacturers.

For us, CSR doesn't begin and end with our business processes. Furthering our commitment to the community, we're continuing to support the Children's Air Ambulance as our nominated Charity for 2008. Various internal and client-focused projects allow us to make a significant contribution towards the organisation's progression.

Being in tune with our responsibilities – both corporate and social – is something we take very seriously. We run a dedicated CSR Steering Group which meets on a regular basis to ensure that we're moving in the right direction, and that no aspects of the business are overlooked.

It may seem like additional work and expense, but clients are beginning to look for something more than the cheapest provider.

■ Richard Bailey
Managing Director
Advance Security



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