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Four reasons why your security system is costing more than it should - by Doug Haines

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Doug Haines,
Haines Security Solutions

Have you ever complained that your security system is costing too much or that you're not sure it would be effective when you did need it? Well, there's a reason you feel that way.

Misunderstanding

The first reason is because you purchased a system based on what the salesman told you that it would do. You got it because it would notify you when someone broke in during non-open hours, or you'd be able to deter the thief and subsequently catch him or her. The truth is, cameras rarely solve anything. Or better said, less than 3% of the time surveillance footage leads to the arrest of the perpetrator.1 I've also found articles from the U.K. that say the solve rate may be as high as 22%. So, I think it's safe to assume it's probably somewhere in between.

Now don't get me wrong, CCTV is a great tool. It allows the "good guys" the convenience of time in catching the "bad guys" and allows other types of behavior to be observed that may prove useful later. Remember, surveillance systems are a tool to be used for assessment of behaviors. They are not the solution in and of themselves. So, they are effective, just not as much as most people think. That said, a recent survey of burglars indicates that 70% of the time they will avoid premises that display a security alarm sign. A word of warning, the sign can't be "Bubba's Security Company" it must be from a reputable company.

Piecemeal

A second reason, is the way the overall electronic security system was designed. Most often, it was designed "piecemeal." This fact alone doesn't mean the system won't function properly but it's kind of like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. You can do it but it's tough and doesn't fit so well. Due to the fast pace of technology improvements, replacement of whole systems is much better at dealing with issues than trying to tie new technology into old. For new construction, it is not uncommon to purchase an entirely integrated system that has the latest bells and whistles. Unfortunately, since technology is moving so fast by the time it actually gets installed there's already

something bigger, better, faster, smarter on the market.

Collaboration

Which kind of brings us to reason three, collaboration. Architects are solution providers, as are engineers. Facility managers are solution users. And security professionals believe there's a terrorist or bad guy behind every tree and they're in the middle of the darn forest. Well, you know what none of them are wrong or have the wrong perspective, except the security guys. Each profession looks at the issue from a different perspective and subsequently applies their knowledge and expertise. This "vertical-ness" causes everyone to operate almost in a vacuum. I say almost because architects and engineers engage often and routinely with each other and the folks wanting the project done. It's the security guys that are added almost as an afterthought. The process is "horizontal" and it needs to be treated that way. That said, sometimes it's okay to bring in folks that provide specific capabilities toward the end of the project; i.e., craftsmen, skilled labors, etc. Security professionals should be looked at as solution providers and not product providers. This change in perspective will go far in influencing the design of the building and subsequently costs.

Inclusiveness

The lack of inclusivity at the onset leads us to reason number four – building design. Believe it or not, beyond CPTED principles there are strategies that can be used to deter and prevent criminal activity and reduce the effects of, heaven forbid, a catastrophic man-made event. Building design is both functional and aesthetical. There usually is little consideration given to the threats that the occupants or facility must face, other than natural hazards and some crime, but for the most part buildings and high-occupancy spaces for that matter are designed for function and aesthetics. There's nothing wrong with that. We need to add security to the function and aesthetics formula. By not doing so short-range costs for materials and equipment is increased and long-range costs in manpower and maintenance go through the roof. Which brings us full circle.

Footnotes:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CCTV

Doug Haines, MPSE, is owner/CEO of Haines Security Solutions, Ventura, Calif.