

A Layered Approach to Office Building and Property Management

Creating, implementing and maintaining a strong and dynamic security program for commercial real estate owners and property managers presents unique challenges in today's ever-

changing business environment. One challenge is created as a result of how quickly office buildings change hands.

Often times, real estate transactions have resulted in a change of the third party property management companies which are

responsible for leasing and managing operations of the building. With a new property management company comes a new business model and a different approach to security and life safety. Some property management companies prefer to transfer the risk to insurance companies and provide minimum levels of security. This approach in and of itself presents another unique challenge of trying to provide more while operating with less. Other property management companies who are responsible for Class A properties understand the value of a strong security program and commit the financial resources to make it happen.

A BALANCING ACT

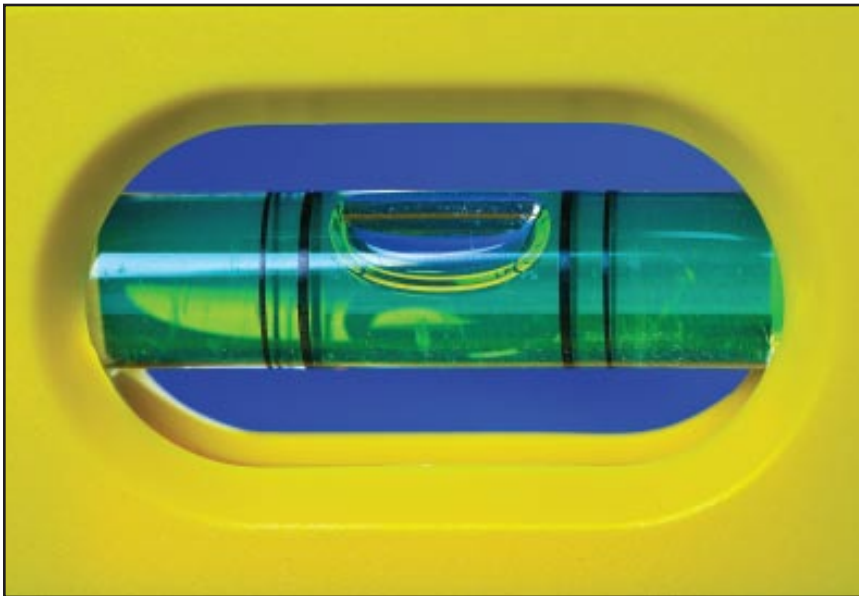
Regardless of the business model or operating practices, it is imperative for the security executive to create a well-balanced security program and communicate the value to their property management company and property owners.

Just like a trapeze artist performing a high wire act understands the importance of balance, a security practitioner must understand the importance of balancing a security program with the unique demands that office buildings require. Tenants require and pay for high quality space that is easy to access and safe for employees, guests and clients.

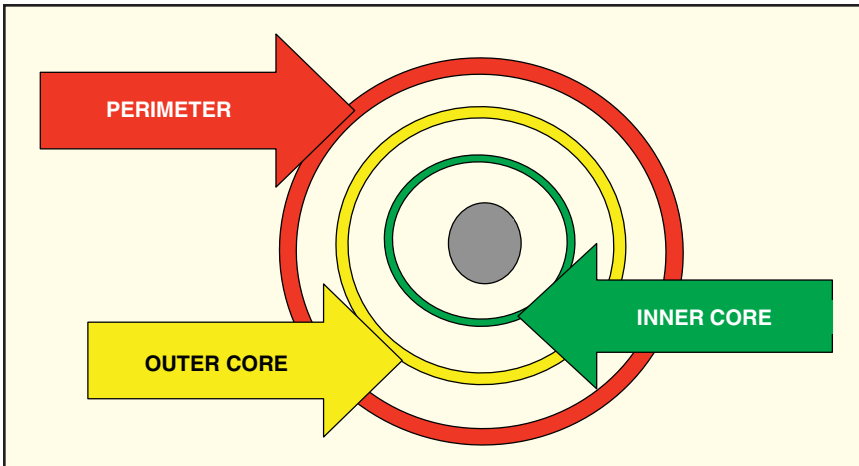
LAYERS OF PROTECTION

One of the most effective ways of creating a robust program is to understand what you are protecting against. The question to ask is, "What is the threat?" Designing an effective and sustainable security program starts with a concentric ring approach to add layers of protection. Start with the perimeter and work your way to the interior part of the building. Add layers of protection until you reach your final objective.

Protecting the exterior of a building involves decisions related to distance and infrastructure. Traffic lanes, sidewalks, out-



Creating a well-balanced security program and communicating the value to property management companies and property owners is imperative, regardless of the business model or operating practices.





Turnstiles in the lobby can slow a visitor, thus giving security more time to view passes and request a valid identification or access card. This one comes from Smarter Security Solutions, Inc.

door dining venues, public utilities such as drains/sewers, electrical vaults and mechanical systems can limit the amount and type of exterior protection devices used to protect the physical structure.

It is important to identify potential risks to the property based on specific perimeter elements. For example, a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed crashing into pedestrians or the main entrance of the building is a risk. One solution is to create greater distance between traffic lanes and the building. Installing high-impact vehicle barriers around the perimeter of the building or loading dock is an effective layer of protection to detour or minimize this potential threat.

THE OUTER CORE

Many office buildings have retail tenants located in common areas of the building, typically on first and second floors. These retail establishments can be amenities for tenants and in most cases are accessible to the public. Retail areas present significant challenges for security because the environment must be welcoming and friendly and must provide easy means of egress for customers. One standard approach is to employ surveillance cameras strategically located throughout the retail areas to detour or detect unlawful activity. Another critical component of maintaining safe retail areas is to deploy professionally trained security officers who can deliver excellent customer service and quickly switch into emergency response mode should situations arise.

Another issue to consider for outer core security in office buildings is multiple retail entrances at ground level. Entrances into a retail area from the street that also feed into

the building can compromise security. That is why many buildings add a third layer of security to the office tower portion of a building.

THE INNER CORE

The inner core of a high-rise office building is defined as the elevator lobbies that feed into the office tower. Post 9/11, many buildings have chosen to restrict access into the office tower by installing access control portals. These portals create a physical barrier between the common lobby and the elevator bank, which services the office tower. Building tenants carry an electronic credential that is programmed to grant access through the access portal. This type of system creates a less open environment for business visitors. Tenants must pre-register their clients and visitor on Web-based visitor management systems and authorize the issuance of a temporary visitors pass. Upon arrival, clients and visitors must display a valid government issued identification card before they receive a temporary visitor pass.

Security programs must be sustainable and continue to evolve as business conditions change. The proper balance between technology, procedures and security officer staffing levels ensure that a layered approach works as designed.

Security officers working in the commercial real estate environment present the biggest challenge to the success of the entire program. They must be properly trained and proficient in their positions, beyond the basic function that security officers perform. Management positions in electronic security and life safety systems require knowledge in emergency response procedures, screening techniques, addressing tenant/visitor needs (giving direc-



Using decorative concrete bollards and cautionary entrance/exit wedges can easily protect pedestrians on sidewalks and prohibit wrong-way entrance into parking garages. Both of these come from SecureUSA.

tions), proper business communication and the ability to identify suspicious activity; each of these tasks require a unique skill set that low-bids will not usually provide.

By creating a solid security plan that addresses each element of the layered



Taking on the challenge of trying to provide more while operating with less is often nearly impossible.



approach, a property manager and owner can greatly limit risks and ensure tenants and visitors to their properties a safe experience. This in turn can translate into significant cost savings from a risk management perspective. **SECURITY**

About the Source

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