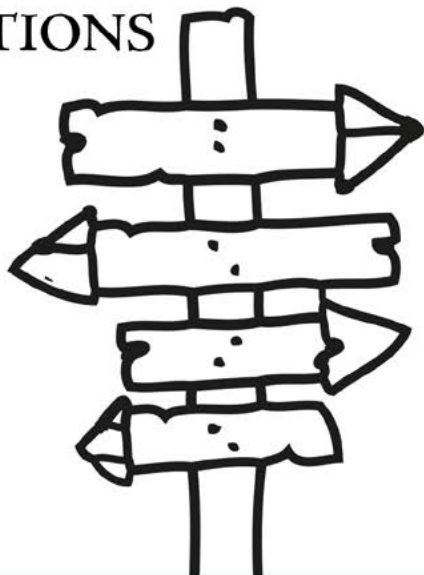# A GUIDE TO

SECURITY GUARD COMPANY

OPERATIONS

It's about more than putting a warm body on post

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A Guide To Security Guard Company Operations - It's about more than putting a warm body on post – 1st Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Is your security guard business struggling? Or, are you doing well but wondering if you could be doing even better? Are you sure you know what it takes to win and keep customers even when other companies offer a lower billing rate?

In this competitive market, you can use all the help you can get in developing your business to deliver maximum value to your customers at minimum cost. Over the twelve years that I sold security guard services, I learned a lot of lessons—some of them the hard way. Get the benefit of everything I learned, ranging from tips I developed from trial and error to a reading list of the books I found most valuable in establishing and growing my family's security business.

This book is intended to give you the benefit of my experience without the hassle of trial and error. I'll talk about some of the most common mistakes and pitfalls specific to this industry and how to avoid them. I also lay out specific, actionable steps that you can take to improve and grow your business, develop stronger relationships with your clients, and win new clients even when competing with low-cost security guard companies.

First, because your security officers are your business, this book contains valuable tips for hiring and training security officers, including developing a supervisor program and why you should be doing this. We'll also lay out the Dos and Don'ts of managing your officers, from how, who, and when to hire to best practices for terminating an officer (and when not to!), to how to provide your security officers with the tools they need to succeed as partners in your company.

Second, we'll explain how to deliver maximum value to your clients and make sure they know just how valuable the service is that you are providing as well as how to make yourself more valuable to your clients—without adding to your costs. And,

we'll give you the scoop on what equipment really is essential to your business so that you can figure out how much you need to be spending on things such as uniforms, communication, and training and management tools.

Third, we'll share with you what you need to know to run a great security guard company, sure signs that your company is in trouble and what to do about it, the secrets of keeping a full staff of qualified officers, how and why to keep your SUTA rate low, and much more.

OfficerReports.com is proud to offer this comprehensive and practical guide to operating a great security guard company as part of our ongoing commitment to helping security guard company owners and managers build their businesses and provide standout service.

You can always find more knowledge and up-to-date information on security guard company management at our online magazine, Security Guard Services Magazine, and our blog, The Soapbox.

We look forward to working with you!

CHAPTER

YOUR OFFICERS ARE THE FACE OF YOUR COMPANY

TIPS FOR A NEW SECURITY GUARD

Security Tips to Share With a New Security Guard

I was talking with a client once about the importance of providing officers with an appropriate level of training prior to their starting work. That conversation started me thinking about the employee orientation that we provided to our officers before they started working at our clients' sites. In hindsight, while the orientation was pretty comprehensive, there are a few things that I think we missed. If I were going to do it again, I think I would include some real world, common sense security guard tips in our orientation. Here are a few of the tips that I would give to my security officers.

- **Remember that the client is not your friend.** Never confuse the client's kindness or congeniality with friendship. What the client is showing you by being friendly is that they respect and value the service that you provide. Those kind gestures do not mean that they are willing to overlook any shortcomings or lapses in service. So when the client calls complaining about something that you did, don't feel betrayed because the client is just doing their job. It's nothing personal, because as a security officer the client is not your friend.

- **Learn to be professional without trying to be friends.** Don't attempt to build friendships. Attempt to build professional relationships that make the client love having you there. That type of relationship makes you more valuable to the client and the security company.

- **The difference of the billing rate minus the wage rate is not what the company makes on the contract.** So

despite all of the rumors security officers hear about how much the company is raking in, the company is not that profitable. Security guard companies have a lot of expenses beyond what they pay their officers. Which takes me to the next point…

- **Pricing a security contract is a science that security officers should familiarize themselves with.** When you evaluate a security guard contract you have to look at more than just the billing rate and wage rate. You have to look at FUTA, SUTA, General Liability, Workers Compensation, and a dozen other costs. So in the end the $1 – 3 that the security guard company makes per hour really isn't that much.

- **Complaining to the client about how much you make as a security officer doesn't get you a raise.** Nine times out of ten they probably already know. I can't count the number of times I've heard about officers complaining to clients about pay. But I do remember that on a number of those occasions, the client asked for the security officer to be removed from the site. To get a raise, one of three things has to happen:

  1) A yearly increase is built into the contract that allows for officers to receive raises;

  2) There is a wage increment program built into the contract; or

  3) The client agrees to a billing rate increase that will allow the officers to receive a raise.

- **Not signing your write-up doesn't really mean anything.** If and when you are ever disciplined, whether or not you sign your write-up, it makes no difference. If

you don't sign it, a witness signs it stating that you were informed but didn't sign. This isn't a battle you can win, so don't waste your energy objecting.

- **Take responsibility for your own actions and the success of your security team.** Taking responsibility will help ensure that the contract for the site that you are working is successful. Because although the management team can provide support for the officers at the site, it is ultimately the officers' performance that the client uses to judge the success of the contract. Taking responsibility will almost guarantee your success with any security company.

There are probably a dozen more security guard tips that I could come up with, but you will probably come up with your own as you go. Make sure to write them down and incorporate them into your orientation program for your new officers. Of course, one of the most important things you will cover in your orientation is how to write daily activity reports, so let's talk about how to do that.

HOW TO WRITE A
DAILY
ACTIVITY
REPORT

How To Write A Daily Activity Report That Matters

During your security officer's shift, he or she is responsible for capturing a substantial amount of information via the many reports that they write, including daily activity reports, incident reports, maintenance requests, truck logs, and a multitude of others. The most important is the officer's daily activity report. The daily activity report (DAR) is the most common of all security guard reports because one is completed by every officer, every shift. Security officers act as the eyes and ears of the customer, therefore it is critical that your officers provide your customers with relevant and valuable information. As such, it is important that every security officer knows how to write a good daily activity report.

Here are some tips that your officers can use to provide your customers with quality daily activity reports. Whether your organization is using daily activity report software such as that provided by OfficerReports.com or you are still using handwritten reports, you should find these tips helpful.

1. Branding is important.

Every report that your organization provides to its customers should be branded with your company name and logo. By doing this you will help your customers associate your organization with high quality products. Building your brand helps build incredible value for your organization.

2. Make sure reports are time stamped.

Every DAR should be time stamped. It should also contain the location that the report pertains to as well as the name of the officer who submitted the report. This step is critical in maintaining the evidentiary value of the report in case it is used in court.

3. Include shift start notes.

At the start of the officer's shift, there are many details that they should be recording. The three most important details are:

- The shift that the officer is working;
- Any special instructions that the officer receives from the client or a supervisor (these instructions should also be added to the Pass On Log); and
- An inventory of the items that the officer receives and the condition of those items.

4. Make information easy to find

When your officers write a DAR, they should make it easy for the reader to quickly find the information that they are looking for. If you are using digital reporting, ensure that the officers are specifying the tasks that they are performing. For example, if they are doing an "Employee Escort," that activity should be distinct and separate from their other activities. By setting up the DAR in this way, it is easier to quantify the officer's activities throughout the shift. If you are using handwritten reports, think about having the officer use highlighters to color code their activities. For instance, incidents might be red while maintenance issues might be blue.

5. Show consistent activity

Every observation that the officer makes should be accompanied by the time that the officer is making that observation. If you are using daily activity report software, this time stamp will help demonstrate to your customers that your officers are active throughout their shifts. In addition, if the DAR turns out to have legal significance, an accurate detailing of activities will be important.

6. Be descriptive

During the course of a shift, there are a number of details that officers can add to their daily activity reports. Officers should provide the Who, What, When, and Where for observations that they are making. Keep in mind that the phrase **"Made rounds all secure" is unacceptable** and demonstrates a lack of effort on the part of the security officer. Even on uneventful shifts, the officer's report can include things like:

- How long it took to complete a patrol
- People that the officer sees or talks to
- What the officer has observed looking out of the window
- Things that the officer hears

7. The K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid) Principle

As with many things, the KISS Principle also applies to writing daily activity reports. Unless the officer has won a Pulitzer Prize, they should refrain from attempting to show off their vocabulary. An officer's observations should be concise, descriptive, and factual.

Additionally, the officer should only report what they know as a fact, and should refrain from stating their opinions or making speculations. The report should contain *nothing* but the facts.

8. Use common language

Unless instructed otherwise, security officers should refrain from using 10 codes, unfamiliar abbreviations, or any terminology that would make the report hard to understand by a civilian reader. See #7…

9. Include images

A picture is worth a thousand words. If your officers are using reporting software, be sure that they include photos and images as applicable. The officer should also reference the images in the report. The images should include a timestamp as well as the name of the person who collected the image.

10. Follow up

In addition to the information that is directly submitted by the officer, information that comes to the officer or the customer after the report is submitted should be accurately time stamped and logged. If you are using paper reports, consider using the back of your reports for this information.

Whether your organization has implemented digital reporting or is still using handwritten reports, if your officers understand how to write a daily activity report, your reports will be professional. At some point, your officers' reports may be referenced by your customer, lawyers, or law enforcement, so make sure they are representative of the quality of your organization.

To see an example of an electronic DAR, please click this link: Daily Activity Report Example

CRIMES

AGAINST

SECURITY

OFFICERS

Are Crimes Against Security Officers Penalized Heavily Enough?

The job of a security officer is often a tough one, with officers facing unknown risks and threats every time they come to work. The nature of the profession means security officers must be ready for anything, including life or death situations. Even seemingly low-risk locations, such as shopping malls or sporting events, can turn dangerous quickly, and security officers who work in remote areas or at night face even higher risks. As the owner of a security guard company, it is vital that you understand what your employees face every day and how to protect them. Here's what you need to know about crimes against security officers.

The Statistics for Crimes Against Security Officers

Compared with other occupations, being a security officer is dangerous, though not as dangerous as serving as a police officer.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics says there are about 1.1 million security officers working in the United States, the majority of them through investigation and security firms (compared with about 654,000 police officers). In 2014 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), the violent death rate was 1.36 per 100,000 for security officers and 8.23 for police officers; for the entire workforce, it was 0.52 per 100,000.

Assaults on security officers seem to be getting more common, although that may be a function of the fact that the number of security officers is growing, as well.

The Laws

In all states, crimes against police officers carry special punishments. An assault of a police officer often carries a felony charge. These special statuses are sometimes extended to other professions, such as firefighters, emergency responders, EMTs, and even teachers. In some states, this status applies to security officers, but they may not carry the same penalties as crimes against police officers. For example, in Illinois, charges of battery or assault are raised to "aggravated" when knowingly committed against a private security officer, peace officer, community policing volunteer, and correctional institution employee. But escalating it to a felony charge depends on the prosecutor. In California, however, the crime of "battery on a peace officer" applies to both police officers and security officers as well as protected roles including lifeguards, doctors, and nurses providing emergency medical care.

There is some merit to giving crimes against security officers special status, says Chris Hertig, a board member for the International Federation for Protection Officers, which helps set education and training standards for security officers. As initial responders in crimes, security officers may play roles similar to law enforcement and, arguably, should have higher protections based on that.

The issue, however, is that that status can also imply law enforcement authority, or blur the line between security officers and police officers. "Giving a special status is a step in that direction," he says.

What's Next?

Hertig says he's unaware of any nationwide initiatives to increase penalties for crimes against security officers. "I don't see a big push for it, although down the road that could change," he says. But an uptick in violent crime could bring a greater public awareness of the risks security officers face. "The first person on the scene faces the greatest danger, and in many cases, that's a security officer." In addition, increased use of cellphone cameras in confrontations could boost awareness of crimes against security officers.

Hertig also says that increased violence against security officers is likely to affect the way employers train them. "You can't just put uniforms on people and hand them a policy," he says. Employers who want to boost training efforts for their security officers can provide more information about de-escalation and responding to active threats.

As your business grows, training your officers to ensure that they understand the challenges that they face while on duty is something that you will want to start delegating to your supervisors. Next, we'll talk about how to go about starting a supervisor development program.

Developing Supervisors For Your Security Business

I've had quite a number of conversations with security guard company owners and managers about the challenges involved in providing adequate supervision for their security officers. I continue to believe that digital solutions are a key component of the formula for adequate supervision. But I often find myself recounting lessons learned from the security business my father and I started.

The Beginning

When my father and I first started our security business back in the early 2000s we went about managing the business as many people do. As owners, we shouldered all of the tasks and responsibilities associated with growing a security guard company, which included recruiting, scheduling, training, etc. As we began to approach about 50 full-time officers, we realized that we needed to look at other ways of managing our growing workload. We started promoting officers to supervisors and delegating some responsibilities to them. Unfortunately, we didn't have a structured program for promotions in place. We ended up making some bad choices and got burned by several of our supervisors.

What we realized was that our supervisors' failures were not the result of the supervisors not caring about their jobs or the company, but more about how we developed our supervisors and delegated responsibility.

Delegating Responsibilities in Your Security Business

Over time, as we continuously looked to improve the way our security business operated, we designed a supervisory development program that helped our company quickly accelerate our growth. The supervisory program allowed us to delegate some of the more redundant operational components and quality control functions to other personnel. Subsequently, my father and I were able to focus our time on more critical issues. Here are some tips to help you if you are ready to start your own supervisory program:

1. **You have to get started.** Whether you've already delegated responsibilities and gotten burned before or are considering delegating to supervisors, the most important step is to get started. Accept the fact that there will be some hurdles, but know that with a good plan you will be able to overcome them.

2. **Choose which tasks to delegate.** In order to grow, you should be spending your time on your security business's most critical tasks or the ones that only you can do. We chose to delegate scheduling, some aspects of hiring, and some aspects of the disciplinary process. We felt that with the right training most supervisors could appropriately handle those tasks.

3. **Set up a system for follow-up.** When you delegate responsibility, especially to new supervisors, you cannot leave them to figure it all out on their own. You must stay close enough to the process to know if you need to reinsert yourself. In our business, we setup a biweekly 30-minute non-mandatory conference call for all supervisors. During these meetings, we discussed pressing issues or challenges that the supervisors were facing. Issues could

then be addressed with individual supervisors in follow-up conversations.

4. **Pick the best person.** Make sure your chosen officers have the abilities, values, and work ethic necessary to get the job done. Keep in mind that these might not necessarily be the officers that you like the most.

5. **Train your supervisor and give them resources.** How you train your supervisors will ultimately determine their success or failure and that of your security business. Ensure that your supervisors have been provided resources that help them understand what it is to be a supervisor. Those resources can include in-person, classroom, and even online training. There are myriad of resources to be found online, but we used TrainingDepartment.com as our online training resource.

6. **Give them the goal not just a procedure.** As a manager, you must set clear goals for each supervisor. Just telling them to make sure everyone follows procedure is not enough. Consider sharing with them how you achieve the goals you have outlined. Afterwards, step back and field any questions that they might have as they take on the responsibility.

7. **Don't expect miracles—be patient.** For many of your supervisors it may be their first time being given such responsibility, so they may make mistakes. Be sure that when mistakes are made that they are used as a learning experience.

8. **Reward your supervisors in public and on paper.** This is the simplest step, but often times in a security business it is the most forgotten. When your supervisors

do well, praise them in public and in private. Make sure that they are also recognized as part of their performance review.

In the end, although effectively delegating is key for a security business's success, be careful to never delegate the "buck stops here" role. That responsibility should always remain with you. But as for the decisions you do delegate to your supervisors, it is crucial that you trust them in making those decisions.

Don't Trust Your Security Supervisor—If You Want To Fail

Every security business owner will eventually have to confront their fear of delegating to supervisors in order to continue growing their business. If your security business's supervisory development program includes at least the eight points above, you will have significantly more successes than failures.

That being said, it is imperative that you *trust* your supervisors. Not trusting the people you have trained and delegated responsibility to can really hurt your business and keep you from growing.

I've worked across several industries for companies of all sizes. Of all the lessons that I have learned throughout my career, the most impactful have been about managing people. One of the most important lessons that I learned working in the security guard industry is that it is **impossible** to be successful without developing great security supervisors.

During my time managing my family's security guard company, I learned some valuable lessons. At one point in the business, we had decided to start delegating some of the responsibilities that we as owners had been managing. One of our senior officers was promoted to sergeant. Let's call her "Sarge." After her promotion, Sarge was responsible for managing a team of about five security officers.

Trusting officers such as Sarge to make decisions without us was a very tough thing to do, and for good reason. It was my

assumption, or maybe I was just hoping, that officers like Sarge who had been in the industry for a while understood what was needed to make a security team successful. Sadly, I couldn't have been more incorrect. In the first few months after Sarge's promotion, she made some very questionable decisions that left me thinking, "I can't trust her judgment." There were even more times when I got off the phone with her thinking to myself, "This is never going to work!"

> *"When there is no way out, find a deeper way in!"*
> **– THE INTERNATIONAL**

At some point during those first few months, despite all of our doubts, we decided that there was no going back. So instead of reversing course, we doubled down. We made two major decisions that would determine how successful our supervisors were going to be. The first decision was investing heavily in formal training.

Security Supervisors Need A Foundation

We had determined that most officers had not been given a foundation on which they could begin building their supervisory skills. As it turned out, many of the things that I thought were common knowledge weren't so common. So in order to get Sarge and our other supervisors the foundational knowledge that they needed, we began using Trainingdepartment.com as one of our training tools.   With Trainingdepartment.com the supervisors were able to take self-paced classes that included:

- Communication Essentials for Managers
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Preventing Harassment In the Workplace
- Customer Service

After of our security supervisors finished the curriculum that we had outlined, we got the same response from many of them: "Wow, I didn't know a lot of that." Although the information that they received from the online training and classroom sessions was valuable, getting them real world experience would be pivotal.

Security Supervisors Need Experience

Not only did our security officers lack of foundational knowledge, I also discovered that very few of our officers had ever had the responsibility of making a "real decision" on the job. It's generally accepted that without having the opportunity to make decisions and mistakes, no one can be a good supervisor, manager, or leader. So our second decision was committing to letting our security supervisors make real world decisions and learn from any mistakes that they made.

Let's look at an example:

Sarge was eager to have a member of her team terminated. Prior to our commitment to giving supervisors experience, our policy was that a member from the ownership team would handle all terminations. But based on this new commitment, supervisors were now going to have to participate in all terminations as well as some other internal processes.

So Sarge was going to "co-manage" the process of terminating the officer as well as that of hiring a new officer. Prior to this, as far as our officers were concerned, when an officer was terminated a new officer magically appeared to take that officer's place. But unbeknownst to the officers, there was a lot that went into recruiting and hiring a new officer. It was going to be essential for our security supervisors to understand that

process if they were going to understand the mechanics of how the company operated.

Although Sarge was a little cavalier about the meeting to terminate the officer, I could see that as the meeting progressed she began to understand the seriousness of what was happening. This was someone's job that was being discussed, someone's way of feeding their family, and there were going to be real consequences for that person as a result of this meeting.

After the meeting, we had her focus on covering her open post. We'd helped her out by getting it covered for the next few days, but after that it was up to her to keep it staffed—while keeping overtime to a minimum.

During that following two or three weeks, she had to work the phones to find floaters, cover midnight shifts, and participate in interviews of candidates. I remember trying not to laugh from the exasperation in her voice when she asked, "Have we found anyone to replace the officer?" and "Where are you keeping all the good applications?" Before then, she hadn't considered the consequences of terminating an employee, but now she was getting it.

After that experience, she substantially changed the way she led her team and approached her position. She had finally begun to understand what it meant to be a supervisor and trusted leader. Happily I can report that after she was given the opportunity to make a few more mistakes, she grew into the type of security supervisor that I am proud to have called a team member.

On my last day in the security guard business, I had conversations with a dozen or more officers who stopped by to say good-bye. But it was the conversation with Sarge that has always

stuck out in my mind. She told me that no one had ever given her the level of trust and responsibility that we'd given her and that she would always be thankful for that.

Although it can be easy to be cynical about the quality of your officers, don't focus on the bad seeds. I truly believe that most security officers and security supervisors want to be great employees—you just have to show them how to get there. So if you want to be the best company that you can be, commit to giving your security supervisors the knowledge and experience that they need to be successful.

In our next chapter, we'll talk more about the business side of running your company and what you need to do and understand to make sure your business thrives.

CHAPTER

FOR YOUR COMPANY

The Security Guard Business Is Not Law Enforcement

I learned a long time ago that the security guard business is not the same as law enforcement. If you attempt to run your security guard business as a quasi-law enforcement agency, your results will be less than optimal. Although each has similar goals, they are two completely different types of organizations.

When my father and I started our security guard company, the majority of my experience had been in sales and marketing. My father, on the other hand, was a seasoned law enforcement officer with more than 25 years of experience. I thought with that type of law enforcement background, running a security guard business would be a breeze—how wrong I was. Although both institutions are dedicated to protecting people and property, they each perform their duties in completely dissimilar environments.

Let's take a look at several ways the two enterprises differ. First, the difference in training for security officers and law enforcement officers is night and day. Training for security officers is measured in hours (typically 0 to 40), while training for police officers is measured in weeks (on average 20 to 30). The result of this differences in training is a substantially different culture, mindset, and level of dedication. Attempting to treat security officers like police officers will lead to low morale and high turnover.

Second, the sources of funding for the two organizations are on opposite ends of the spectrum. For law enforcement agencies, their budgets typically depend on allocations from their local government. Security guard agencies, on the other hand, depend on being able to win contracts that help sustain and grow their

business. The ability to go into the marketplace and solicit contracts is vital for all security guard companies.

Third, the way that each of these institutions interacts with their customers is markedly different. Police and other law enforcement personnel are not expected to constantly engage with their customers, who are the citizens within their jurisdiction. On the other hand, security guard businesses must encourage their officers to be highly engaged with their customers. If their security officers are not personable and approachable, the security guard company risks losing their customers and contracts.

Although some customers may believe that having a law enforcement background makes for good security service, one has very little to do with the other. And as my father and I learned, a security guard business cannot be treated like a law enforcement agency. On the way to building a successful business, my father and I learned that lesson and many others, many of which we learned through trial and error. But we also spent long hours taking classes, reading articles, and devouring books that focused on building a successful business.

I have distilled my library down to seven books that I would encourage any security guard industry professional to read. They each, in their own way, taught me some very valuable lessons.

Security Guard Business Sales & Marketing:

Everything I Know about Marketing I Learned from Google *by Aaron Goldman.* Although this book centers on Google's marketing tactics, the ideas behind these tactics are valuable to most companies in most industries.

Selling For Dummies *by Tom Hopkins.* There are thousands of books that have been written about the art of selling.

Selling For Dummies is my go-to book for understanding the basics.

Guerilla Marketing *by Jay Conrad Levinson.* Although this book was originally published before the coming of the Internet Age, there are still some valuable concepts to be learned regarding offline marketing campaigns.

Ultimate Guide To Search Engine Optimization *by Jon Rogerund.* According to research from Google and CEB, customers get nearly 60% through the sales process before engaging a sales rep. In the Digital Age, buyers research companies, products, and services online before contacting them. Understanding search engine optimization and how it affects your website's place in search engines is critical to your organization.

Security Guard Business Operations:

Introduction to Security *by Robert J. Fischer and Gion Green.* This book served as one of two primers that I referred to regularly. It has been called "the leading introduction to private security" for over 30 years because of its balanced and professional approach to the topic.

Outsourcing Security: A Guide For Contracting Services *by John Stees.* Because I had never purchased security services, I was not familiar with how security buyers assessed and purchased security guard service. This book gives security guard companies insight into how buyers may plan, evaluate, and contract for security services.

Anatomy of a Business Plan *by Linda Pinson.* Running your security guard business by the seat of your pants will more often than not leave you pants-less. Understanding

how to develop a comprehensive business plan is a mandatory skill in every business.

Financial Statements *by Thomas R. Ittelson*. As a non-financial manager, I have read numerous books to help me better understand balance sheets and P&L's. *Financial Statements* was easy to read and gave good examples.

Security Guard Business Management

The Philosophic Consultant *by Peter Koestenbaum.* This is a book that I hold in high regard. I even wrote an article based on the lessons that I learned from this book. Your security guard business is just that, a business. It just happens to be a business that provides security guard services. If you focus more on the business aspect of your security guard business than on the tools and arrests, you will undoubtedly be much more successful.

You will probably learn a lot of things by trial and error like we did. But building your understanding of what it takes to run a successful business and specifically what it takes to run security guard business *before* you make those errors will help ensure you learn the right lessons so that you can grow your business.

Now let's look at what will surely doom your security guard business: denial.

Denial Is A Bad Strategy For Your Security Guard Company

According to author and entrepreneur Paul Ormerod, more than 10% of all companies in the US close their doors yearly. One of the major reasons for those companies' failures, according to Ormerod, is denial. Don't let yours be one of those doomed companies.

Have you ever had a conversation with someone and thought to yourself, "Is he kidding? That's a horrible idea!" Every now and then I have those types of conversations with security guard company owners regarding our security guard tour tracking software. After we extol the virtues of being able to track security officers in real time using GPS, some owners, surprisingly, will say, "No, I don't want my customers to know if my officers aren't doing their jobs."

In most cases, not wanting their customers to know also probably means that they themselves don't know or don't want to know. Far be it from me to tell a customer how to run their business, but I doubt that denial has ever been a successful management strategy. However, I do understand the reason that some owners might think this way: **fear**.

Fear of hearing about a new problem is understandable, especially when much of your day is already spent putting out fires. But because you don't know about a problem, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It just means that sooner or later you will be getting a call from an angry customer about something that could have been solved beforehand.

An owner or manager of a security guard company, you'll have to eventually cowboy up unless you want to be included in that failed 10% of companies. So, once you've decided to put fear aside and address the issues facing your company, here are a few strategies that I have found useful when navigating my company's challenges.

First, you have to listen to your gut. Nine times out of 10 you already know what you need to do to solve the issues that you have. Many times, those solutions aren't easy or pleasant, but trust your instincts and go for it.

Second, if the problem is widespread you will have to deal with it in bite-sized chunks. My father often says, "How do you eat an elephant? Answer: one piece at a time." Start by drilling down into the problem to identify its individual components. Once you have identified those pieces, you can solve them one at a time.

Third, focus on where it is that you want to end up. If you are like me, you are not always able to see the path from where you are now to where you want you to be. Working backwards can give you insight into how to get there in the form of a creative or outside-the-box solution.

Finally, you have to be honest about what you will be able to accomplish when addressing your security guard company's challenges. Reducing your overtime to zero or guaranteeing that your officers will never sleep on the job may be great goals, but are they realistic? Not every problem has a perfect solution—realizing this is a necessary part of solving problems. Get as close as reasonably possible to perfect and then plan for the eventualities.

In the long run, turning a blind eye to your security guard company's issues will always be a recipe for failure. If you doubt there are lessons to be learned from living in denial, ask your

friends who work at—or used to work at—Kodak, Hummer, and Blackberry.

You may not know what issues your company has, but that doesn't meant you don't have them. One of the things you should be doing to find out is conducting an annual company review.

It's Time For Your Annual Security Guard Company Review

You should set aside a few days of every year to perform an in-depth company review. The beginning of a new year is a good time to do this. When I think about a security guard company review, one particular quote comes to mind:

> "Those who cannot remember the past are
> condemned to repeat it."
> **– GEORGE SANTAYANA**

As a security guard company manager, as with any other company owner or manager, you must use what you have done in recent years to guide your future decisions. With that objective in mind, let's talk about what you should be thinking about when you are reviewing your business.

When I say "business review," you probably think about your income statement and your balance sheet. But the review that I am referring to is a little more nuanced. Based on my personal experience, when I review my businesses I tend to focus more on the overall direction of the business and my place within it.

Questions to Ask in a Security Guard Company Review

The questions that I find myself asking in my yearly business review are:

1. **Are you failing to change with the times?** Having a security guard company in the 21st century means being able to recognize opportunities in the market and being nimble enough to take advantage of them—whether that is using technology to better manage your company or finding a new way to market your company. Whatever it is, recognize the shift and adapt accordingly.

2. **Are you underestimating your competition?** As a security industry professional, you know that many security guard companies feel the need to compete solely on price. But are your competitors starting to do things that allow them to compete on more than price? Are your competitors talking to your customers, and if so, what are they talking about?

3. **Have you really differentiated yourself from your competition?** If, for the past year, you have been focused on telling prospects about how well-trained your officers are or about the quality of your hiring process, you've missed the boat. You need to do more to differentiate yourself from low-cost competitors.

4. **Are you talking with your customers enough?** It is your understanding of your customers' pains, value, and behavior that allow you to truly understand them. As a security professional, only a sustained dialogue will allow you to walk the 100s of miles in your customers' shoes that you need to truly understand them. If you aren't, you don't really understand your customers.

5. **How effective is your sales and marketing?** As I talk about in our *free* eBook, All The Things No One Told You About Selling Security Guard Services, the buying process that you and I were so accustomed to has changed. Has

your sales and marketing changed to accommodate the way that your buyers find security guard companies now? After all, the greatest challenge that most security guard businesses have is that not enough people know about them.

6. **Have you lost ground on your margins?** When I was selling security guard services, I eventually learned that profit, not revenue, was the real name of the game. If your margins are eroding, maybe it's time to re-evaluate how and to whom you are selling your services.

7. **Do you know your numbers?** In question number 6, I am talking about your margins. For this question, I am talking about your general financials status. You can't successfully run a business unless you know where every dollar is going. I learned this lesson the hard way a long time ago. If you are managing your own books and aren't a seasoned accountant, find someone who is.

8. **Are you operating efficiently?** If time is money, then efficiency is profit! If you are not running your business in a manner that allows you to do more with less, it's time to start a major overhaul. Consider these questions:

- Are you still having supervisors driving to download wands?
- Are you still printing and distributing schedules?
- How are you managing your security guard reports?
- Are your lease agreements favorable?
- Are your insurance rates competitive?
- Are you vendors' rates competitive?
- Have you minimized your tax liability?

9. **Are you getting in the way of your own success?** As an owner, manager, or leader of a security team, are you sabotaging your own progress? If you are stubborn, paranoid, risk averse, a micro manager, insecure, a conflict avoider, a perfectionist, or any other less-than-favorable personality type, try to make some changes in the next year.

10. **Has the value of your network increased?** Your network is one of your most valuable resources. Evaluate your network yearly to ensure that you have the right people in it. For tips on maximizing your personal network, check out "5 Ways to Maximize Your Personal Network."

11. **Are you reading enough?** It is estimated that the top CEOs read four to five books per month, which is four to five times as many books as the average person reads in a year. If you are only reading four to five books a year, it's time to add some titles to your library. For some suggestions on which books to pick up, check out this infographic.

Now that you know the questions that you should be asking yourself for a non-financial security guard company review, let's look at what you must know to build a successful security guard business.

5 Things You Must Know To Have A Great Security Company

Security guard company owners and managers have wide-ranging backgrounds and experience. Many have military or law enforcement backgrounds, some have previous security experience, and still others come straight from corporate America. But no matter their backgrounds, there are five key things that the owners and managers of a great security company know that those of mediocre companies don't.

1. When they are in front of their customers, their customers are always right.

I have seen, on more than one occasion, a manager telling a customer how and why they are wrong. In most cases, taking that position only erodes any good faith that has been won over time. At great security companies, owners and managers let the customer think they're right, even when they're wrong. That's because they know that the best way to tell a customer that they are wrong is to help them figure it out on their own terms.

But owners and managers at great security companies also know that …

2. Not all customers are good customers.

Once they determine that a customer is not a good fit for their business, they graciously help that customer find a provider that is a better fit for them.

"A great security company is built on the blood, sweat, and tears of its owners…"

3. Owners and managers recognize that their security officers are nothing less than partners in their business.

A great security company is built on the blood, sweat, and tears of its owners and managers. But no matter how good management's relationships are with their customers, they know that it is their officers' performance that maintains their contract. So rather than attempting to strong-arm their officers into compliance, they empower their officers and supervisors in ways that lead to high quality service. They do this knowing that a majority of their officers are hard-working employees who want the company to be as successful as management wants it to be.

4. Owners and managers at great companies know and believe that there is always a way to overcome any obstacle.

Don't get me wrong, there are definitely things that can cause a business to fail, but a majority of those things usually occur over a span of time. Hence, great owners and managers are constantly looking for and evaluating problems before they become major issues. They know that any problem that is caught early enough can be fixed.

For more on problems to look for and pay attention to, see: Five Reasons 8 out of 10 Businesses Fail

5. Great owners and managers are willing to do what their competition is not willing to do.

Being a great security company means that the management team will do and has done things that their competitors probably

find implausible. Whether they are physically knocking on the doors of 30 prospects a day, or firing their sales team in favor of non-traditional selling techniques, their competitors just won't do it. Their willingness to sacrifice time, sleep, and ego will almost always guarantee their success and greatness.

5. The management team at great security companies have a deep understanding of their financials.

In the security guard industry, where contracts can be lost over pennies, they understand where every penny enters their company and where, when, and how fast it leaves. Most are not CPAs, but they are able to look at their financials and get an excellent understanding of where they stand as a company.

For more on understanding your financials, see: Financial Statements by Thomas Ittelson

I'm sure that there are dozens of other things that could be added to this list, but based on my experience, mastering these five things will put you well on your way to creating a great security company.

But even with the best intentions and diligence on your part, things can still go wrong to put your company's future in jeopardy, and that's what we'll talk about next.

15 Signs That Your Company Is In Trouble

One of the fatal flaws that security guard company owners and managers make is working so much in their businesses that they don't work on their businesses. Being so engrossed in putting out the small fires that you face daily can sometimes keep you from paying attention to the signs that your company is in trouble. So take a moment to review this list to see if any of these signs ring true for you.

Please note that the list that we compiled focuses on the non-financial warning signs. The financial signs should be pretty obvious (e.g. bills falling behind or not making a profit), while the non-financial signs can be a little more obscure. Although no one sign on the list guarantees that you are headed for disaster, the more that ring true, the more concerned you should be.

Personal Signs That Your Company Is In Trouble

1. **You're not in love with what you do.** If you love what you're doing, you are more likely to spend the time doing the things that will make you successful. But if you aren't in love, the long hours that you devote to trying to be successful will lead to burn out and eventually failure.

2. **You don't take criticism well.** If you are not capable of taking criticism, you may be missing huge opportunities to improve your business. Keep in mind that this doesn't mean that you have to do everything that people tell you,

but you should at least listen. Good advice is worth its weight in gold.

3. **You don't delegate.** Attempting to do it all yourself limits the true potential of your company. You should be actively looking for opportunities to delegate tasks to employees who are better at doing them than you.

4. **You don't take risks.** In order to be successful, sometimes you have to be willing to take a risk and open yourself up to failure. If you are overly afraid of making mistakes, you run the risk of becoming so fixated on not failing that your security business ceases to grow. Taking risks is one of the necessary elements for keeping your company ahead of the curve.

Customer Related Signs That Your Company Is In Trouble

5. **You are not continuously communicating with your customers.** Failure to understand your customers' perceptions of your services can be a death knell for your company. Communicating with your customers about the service and support that they are receiving will help you see signs that your company is in trouble.

6. **Your customers are not recommending you.** The best form of advertising is and will always be word of mouth marketing by your current customers. If your customers are not recommending you to their colleagues, chances are you probably aren't doing that great of a job. Being able to purchase ads is great, but having customers speaking on your behalf is what really fuels a company's growth.

7. **There is no plan for client retention.** Most companies spend a lot of time and energy finding, qualifying, and closing new business. From my perspective as a sales professional, that is *great*! But if you don't have a formal plan to retain them other than making sure their posts are filled, you may be losing more customers than you should.

8. **Your customers aren't willing to meet.** If your clients are not willing to meet with you, it could be a sign that your company is in trouble. When customers are frustrated with your service, or don't think that meeting with you is a valuable use of their time, you may start getting the cold shoulder. Sometimes what your clients aren't saying can be just as telling as what they have said.

Cultural Signs That Your Company Is In Trouble

9. **You can hear a pin drop.** If you walk the halls of your office and there is no sign of liveliness or energy, it might be a sign of low employee morale. Low employee morale can lead to poor productivity, absenteeism, and unnecessarily high turnover. Low employee morale can also causes a toxic environment that can affect other parts of your business.

10. **You have an "anti-fan" club.** When your company culture does not produce fulfilled and engaged employees, the employees become less likely to contribute to solutions. It becomes easy for them to point out every flaw within the company, which then results in loss of productivity and poor service.

11. **There is not a culture of "yes."** When employees are quick to say "no" to colleagues and customers, it becomes

impossible to move your company in a positive direction. Having a "no" attitude shows negativity, and negativity breeds negative outcomes. Fortunately, the same is true for positivity.

Organizational Signs That Your Company Is In Trouble

12. **You continue to make the same mistakes.** As I have discussed before, there is absolutely nothing wrong with making mistakes. Mistakes and failure offer you and your employees an opportunity to learn. But repeatedly making the same mistakes means that there is a *huge* disconnect within your organization, and this is one of the main signs that your company is in trouble.

13. **Failure to take action.** If you and your colleagues or employees find yourselves in meeting after meeting with nothing getting done, you are wasting valuable time and resources. This lack of action may be a sign of fear or lack of delegated authority.

14. **There seems to be a lack of direction or goals.** When you or your employees are not sure what you should be doing from week to week, it is a sign of poor leadership. When no one is sure of the direction that you are going, people will end up rowing in opposite directions.

15. **Your company has become complacent.** The classic case of a company embracing complacency is Kodak. When is the last time you bought an instant camera? Complacency may very well be the precondition for the beginning of all failures. Companies must continue to innovate and raise the bar. If you find yourself talking to

your customers and colleagues about the same topics and issues year after year, it is time to breathe some new life into your company. Innovation has always been a catalyst for increases in productivity and business growth.

To keep your company healthy and growing, you should be looking at more than just whether you are making a profit at the moment. You should always be looking for opportunities to improve your operations and the service you provide your customers. Running a successful security guard company means being vigilant about looking for problems you may have, acknowledging them, and then putting in the work to find long-term solutions that serve your customers while strengthening your company and supporting your employees.

Remember, your employees are your company, and so proper management of Human Resources is essential. We'll talk about how to do that in our next chapter.

CHAPTER

HUMAN RESOURCES

UNDER
STAFFED

The Dangers of Being An Understaffed Security Company

In an article that I wrote, "The Basics of Hiring Security Guards: Who, Where, When, and How," I outlined some basic principles of the security guard hiring process. In this chapter, I will go into further detail on this subject, including a concept that I call "continuous interviewing." I'll explain this practice later in the chapter, but first I want to elaborate on situations that you might find yourself in if you choose not to.

Understaffed? Your Officers Will Love The Overtime

One of the biggest problems of being understaffed is the inability to cover open posts and consequently incurring excessive officer overtime. "Acceptable" overtime in many industries ranges from 2% to 9%. But in the security guard industry, any amount of overtime is unacceptable. That is because in most contracts, officer overtime is non-billable. Having adequate staffing levels gives you and your schedulers the flexibility that you need in responding to call-offs, no-shows, and temporary service orders.

At our company, we practiced keeping an inordinately high number of part-time/flex officers on staff at any given time. Many of these officers were hired during times when we didn't need additional personnel, but we found that this practice helped us drastically reduce overtime. I must admit, that although we reduced overtime, we increased the number of unhappy officers

who felt that they weren't getting enough hours. But again, the increased complaints were worth the reduced overtime.

Understaffed? You're Going To Make Some Bad Decisions

I was recently speaking to a security guard company manager about a problem that he was having with his officers not submitting daily activity reports at the end of their shifts. Our conversation quickly moved from our software to his disciplinary process and what happens when officers don't follow procedure. He explained that when his officers did not submit their DARs, they were removed from the schedule and would not be put back on until they came to the office to talk with management. I followed up by asking whether or not he had terminated any officers for not following their standard operating procedures. It has been my experience that sometimes you have to set an example for your staff by terminating problem officers. He said that in his case, he had terminated one officer, but it didn't work because other officers were still non-compliant. He later admitted that he was hesitant to fire any other officers because of insufficient staffing levels…that's a problem.

There are two lessons on inadequate staffing to be learned from that conversation. First, being understaffed will make you accept behavior that you would otherwise find totally unacceptable. I am pretty sure that if this manager had sufficient staffing levels, he would have happily terminated every officer that was not in compliance with their post orders. But because of poor staffing levels, he was stuck with officers who weren't acting in the best interest of his company or clients.

Second, understaffing will allow bad behavior to metastasize to the other officers in your organization. I have learned from

personal experience that word travels fast about not having to do your job. I can hear the conversation right now:

Officer 1: Hey Officer 2, you do daily activity reports?

Officer 2: Yeah, don't you?

Officer 1: Naw, they don't really care if you turn them in or not. It's just busy work.

Officer 2: Really? Then I'm not doing them either!

You can probably imagine different versions of this same conversation occurring across his security guard force. When you have one bad officer, it is of the utmost importance that you remove that officer from your employee roster before his or her bad habits spread.

Understaffed? Your Training Program Will Suffer

Finally, understaffing will eventually lead to improper training of your officers. I have seen this happen time and time again. When you or your supervisory team are busy covering shifts and putting out fires, the amount of time that you need to spend training your officers, especially the new ones, will suffer. In most cases, having an under-trained security force is a problem that just sort of creeps up on you.

When you are pressed to fill a shift, your biggest priority isn't training the fill-in officers; it is getting him or her on post. Oftentimes, at that point you decide that the officer who is being relieved can train the new officer until a supervisor has a chance to train them. But when you are understaffed, that supervisory training rarely ever happens. Those situations will continue to

happen until one day you look up and you have a lot of officers who aren't familiar with their SOPs.

These are the main ways that understaffing negatively affects your security company's operations, but there are likely others. Unfortunately, keeping your company fully staffed with qualified officers can be tricky. Next we'll look at how to go about finding and hiring officers who will keep your customers happy and your business running smoothly.

WHO
WHERE
WHEN
HOW

The Basics of Hiring Security Guards: Who, Where, When, and How

One of the most difficult tasks for any security guard company manager or owner is finding qualified security guards. We all know that finding a warm body is easy to do, but hiring security guards that don't upset your customers, or earn you a 30-day termination letter, is a lot more daunting. So as a security guard manager who is looking to hire the cream of the crop, what should you be doing? Well, in the same manner that your officers should be thinking about their Ws (who, what, when, where, why, and how) when they write an incident report, you should be thinking about your Ws when hiring security guards.

Who to Hire

- **Candidates with a clean criminal background.** Although background checks can be a little expensive, in many states they are a requirement for officer licensing— either way, don't skip them. There have been multimillion-dollar judgments against companies that employed security guards with criminal backgrounds.

- **Candidates with good interpersonal skills.** Be sure to evaluate the guard's interaction with you and your staff on the day of the interview. Are they pleasant? Do they smile? Are they clean-cut and professional? Remember that these officers will be representing you and your customer at whatever post that they are assigned. You don't wont rude

or unprofessional officers greeting your customers on a Monday morning.

- **Candidates that write well.** As we all know, well-written reports are essential in making a good impression with your customers. So ensure that your candidates have good writing skills by giving them a brief writing test. I used to use a simple picture of a burglar or something security related and ask candidates to write what they saw in less than 200 words. Needless to say I disqualified a lot of security guards from just this writing test.

- **Candidates that pass a drug screen:** This one is pretty self-explanatory. Whether it's a 7 panel or a 10 panel drug screen, make sure that you test *every* officer prior to hire and randomly after hiring.

Where To Hire

- **Security training schools.** If you have your own training school and train a large number of security guards, then you are already reaping the benefits of having a large pool of candidates to choose from. If you don't have a training school or train a ton of security guards, it would behoove you to partner with a security training school, or two, that do. They can funnel their better students to you, which can help get the types of guards that you need. That relationship is a two-way street because it also allows the school to tout their ability to get their students jobs.

- **Your website.** If you don't have a way for potential employees to submit resumes to you on your website, then you are missing a huge opportunity. Your website can

collect applications and resume 24/7 without much effort on your part.

- **On your social media channels.** There are numerous ways to use social media to help find security guard candidates. My favorite is to create social media accounts dedicated to hiring security guards. On your employment application page, tell potential candidates to follow you to be notified of open positions.

When To Hire

- **All the time.** Of all the lessons I have learned regarding hiring, the one that made the most impact on my **organization** was when to look for candidates. If you are responsible for hiring security guards, then I am sure that at one point or another in your career, you made a questionable hire because you needed someone immediately. Most of the time, those hires don't work out and end up costing you in the long run.

  After experiencing that several times, I started what I called a **"continuous interviewing"** program. What that meant was that our organization interviewed candidates continuously. Even when we had no positions to fill, we continued to interview. Because of continuous interviewing, we were able to identify good candidates long before we actually needed them. As a result, we found ourselves able to hire high quality officers whenever necessary. And beyond that, we were also able to reduce turnover because we were hiring the types of officers that we wanted.

How To Hire

I actually touched on the first couple of *hows* in the *who* section: background checks, writing tests, and drug screens. But beyond those basics, you should also include these two *hows* as well:

- **Test the candidates' technological aptitude.** In recent years, security guards are being asked to use more and more technology. Consequently, it has become necessary to ensure that the guards that you are hiring are capable of using whatever technologies that they will encounter on the job. That technology might include CCTV cameras, real-time guard tour tracking, or security guard reporting software. Whatever technology your guards use, ensure your candidates are capable of mastering it.

- **Be a *great* company.** The easiest way to find quality security guards is to be the kind of company that your current guards tell their friends to apply at. Don't forget to motivate your officers to spread the word by offering a bonus of some kind or a cash reward for every candidate that they recommend who is then hired and lasts a set amount of time. Your security guards know what it takes to do the job and have a vested interest in bringing on officers who won't leave them working a double because of a no-call-no-show.

- **Hiring security guards takes planning.** Although hiring security guards quickly is much easier, in the end rushing the hiring process will cost you more than it's worth. Hiring and placing unqualified security guards is a detriment to your company's reputation and its financial livelihood. Take your time and develop a hiring program that will get you the high-caliber security guards that you

need. In the end, careful planning in the hiring process is the only way to ensure your company's long-term success.

Of course, once you say, "you're hired!" that's not the end of your employee evaluation responsibilities. So that both you and your officers have an accurate idea of how well they are performing (or not), you will need to conduct regular performance reviews.

7 TIPS

7 Tips For Conducting A Security Officer Performance Review

Conducting performance reviews for your security officers is a necessity for promoting good morale and ensuring that your officers know what is expected of them. Unfortunately, many managers and supervisors dread conducting employee reviews. This reluctance often stems from not being able to find the right words to describe the employee or fear of a confrontation during the review. I've put together this short list of tips to aid you in conducting a security officer performance review, which I hope will help ease some anxiety.

1. Define the purpose of the review.

Going into a performance review, you and the officer might have a good idea the type of information that will be discussed regarding where their strengths and weaknesses lie. However, the performance review should have the greater goal of providing the officer with actionable steps that they can take to help them master some specific skill. That skill could be something that helps them perform their job better or possibly prepare them for a promotion.

2. Have a formal performance review document.

Both you and your officer should have a formal performance review document to help guide the review. This document should cover the various responsibilities that the officer has while on duty.

3. Only evaluate officer performance.

When evaluating the officer's performance, you should be basing the review on quantifiable data. That data might include the number of times that the officer was late, the quality of reports submitted, or the number of completed patrols at their site. If you are using security guard management software, this information should be readily available.

Additionally, remember to avoid using subjective terminology such as "bad attitude" and "polite" or "rude" or "nice." If you use terms such as "nice" in employee appraisals, other employees could say that you simply like that employee more or are discriminating based on some personal prejudice. You must also be aware that employment lawyers may seize on an opportunity to say that such subjective words are a secret code that shows discrimination.

4. Start on a positive note and be objective about the negative.

When starting your performance review, it's always best to start by telling your officers how you value them as part of the team and discuss the things that they are doing well. By starting off with the positive aspects of their performance, you are less likely to put your officers on the defensive.

When it is time to discuss the negative aspects of the officer's performance, be sure to be clear and concise and refrain from using judgmental language. Remember: use specific examples and back those examples up with quantifiable proof—see tip #3.

5. Avoid confrontation.

Most importantly, you must remember to avoid confrontation. Although performance reviews can be tense, the purpose of the review is to help the officer improve their performance. Using the

performance review as an opportunity to attack the officer will only lower morale and worsen job performance.

6. Make the review a conversation.

In addition to taking the opportunity to inform the officer of how you view her performance, ensure that you also give the officer an opportunity to voice her opinion about her own performance. In fact, many organizations will ask their employees to do a self-assessment. What you will find is that employees will often times be harder on themselves than you would ever be.

7. Summarize the performance review

Finish the review by recapping the key points discussed and any follow-ups that have been agreed upon. Also, don't forget to thank the employee for their participation and also ask how you can be more supportive or a better manager.

This list should provide a great foundation for conducting security officer performance reviews. Remember that the goal is not to criticize your employee but to provide them with constructive feedback and actionable steps that they can take to improve their performance and even work toward a promotion. Expressing your appreciation for what your officer is doing well and helping them set goals will motivate them to provide better service for your customers.

Unfortunately, even with encouragement, some officers will simply fail to perform as you need them to, possibly damaging your relationships with your customers and costing you money. Next, we'll discuss what you need to think about before you take the step of terminating an officer.

YOU'RE FIRED

What You Ought To Know Before You Fire A Security Officer

If you've ever had to fire a security officer, then you know that it's not an easy job. The anxiety that some managers feel before a termination meeting is almost unbearable. But many times, what follows an officer's termination is even more difficult to deal with. That's because terminating a security officer will often lead to conversations with either the state unemployment office, the Department of Labor, or maybe even the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). I remember the first time that I had to attend an unemployment department tele-hearing to defend my decision to terminate a security officer—it didn't go my way. But I used that experience as a learning tool and began developing a detailed policy for terminating security officers that kept our company out of trouble, most of the time.

The important thing to remember about terminating a security officer is that **the termination process begins before you even hire them**. You must have an established system that outlines your company's expectations and a system of progressive discipline if those expectations are not met. This means having a progressive disciplinary policy. "The first step is usually a verbal warning to the employee," says Kathleen David, a human resources representative at HR Solutions. This step lets the employee know what the employer's concerns are, and how the employee can improve. The next step is usually a formal written warning. "At that time, in addition to the suggestions on how to improve the situation, it's noted what the consequences of not

improving could be." From there, an employer may have another, stronger written warning, or go straight to the final written warning, after which an employee is terminated.

So let's look at how to navigate that unpleasant business of termination so as to protect your company from legal and financial liabilities that can arise from employee termination. Although you may have your own policies and procedures, I thought I'd share the *dos* and *don'ts* of my system below. The laws and regulations in your jurisdiction may vary, so please consult a legal professional about your particular circumstances.

When you fire a security officer: *Dos*

1. **Provide an employee manual to all of your officers without exception.** Your employee manual should include the expectations that you have for your officers, what benefits that they will receive, and the details of your progressive disciplinary policy. The employee manual should have a signature page that the officer signs and that you keep as part of that officer's employee file. The signature page demonstrates to any governmental agency that the officer has received a copy of the manual. Additionally, the signature page should have language that states that it is the officer's responsibility to read the manual and follow up with a manager if they don't understand something.

2. **Have a separate page for the disciplinary process.** Even though your employee manual should have a detailed description of your progressive disciplinary process, also have a separate copy of the disciplinary process that you can review with the officer upon hire. After reviewing the policy with the officer, have the officer initial and sign

these pages to demonstrate that they understand your disciplinary process. Place these pages in the security officer's employee file as well.

3. **Follow the process outlined in your progressive disciplinary policy.** If your policy is to issue one verbal warning and three written warnings prior to termination, ensure that you are following that policy. Be careful of being too lenient in following your policy, because an employee could make the argument that policy and practice are not the same, which can lead to a wrongful termination lawsuit.

4. **If it is not on paper, it didn't happen.** Ensure that your supervisors and managers understand that if infractions are not adequately documented, then they did not happen. Always write it up!

5. **Have the meeting in a private space.** Once you have decided to terminate an officer, ensure that the space that you have the termination meeting in provides confidentiality and gives the officer the opportunity to process the news away from prying eyes. If you believe the officer will become violent or disruptive, arrange for the meeting to happen in a place that is suitable for any outbursts (e.g. not at the client site).

6. **Get to the point quickly**. Inform the officer that he is being terminated at the very beginning of the meeting. Although this may sound cruel, engaging in small talk before you let them know will only mean that the employee will be caught off guard when you eventually tell them.

7. **Explain your decision.** Pinpoint the reason that you are firing the officer (e.g. violation of policy, sleeping on

the job). Provide the security officer with any records or documentation that support your decision. Remember not to be too kind in explaining your decision. If you are overly kind, the officer will feel that they are being fired for no reason, which may again lead to a wrongful termination lawsuit. Additionally, if you have an HR department, you should have an HR representative there to answer any questions the officer may have.

8. **Give the officer a chance to speak.** I have found that giving the officer a chance to speak and voice their opinion often defuses tense situations. In fact, I attempted to conduct formal exit interviews after every termination. Oftentimes, the information the officer provides is not helpful, but in some cases it can be a useful resource. Consult a legal professional on what questions to ask during an exit interview.

9. **Tie up loose ends.** At the end of the meeting, include information about when the officer will receive their final pay as well as any information regarding benefits.

10. **Always have a witness.** When you are in the termination meeting always have a witness. Additionally, your termination documentation should have a space to capture the witness' name, date, and signature.

11. **Notify supervisors, managers, and customers as appropriate.** Be sure to be truthful about the termination while also maintaining the officer's privacy. Inform all concerned parties, especially your customers, how the officer's shifts will be covered.

When you fire a security officer: *Don'ts*

1. **Don't violate federal law.** If the reason that you are firing the security officer has *anything* to do with their age, race, religion, sex, national origin, or a disability that does not influence their on-the-job performance, **stop now** and consult an employment practices attorney. This means that even if your customer tells you that they don't want an officer working at their site because of any the protected classes stated above, think long and hard about how you proceed.

2. **Don't stray from your progressive disciplinary process.** Although no laws require a progressive disciplinary policy, many security guard companies find themselves in trouble just because the officer didn't feel that they got a fair chance. Make sure that your managers and supervisors know and follow your policy.

3. **Don't fall into the constructive discharge trap.** If an officer feels that they have been constructively discharged, you could be in trouble. *Constructively discharged* means that the officer felt that the conditions in which they worked were so intolerable that any reasonable person would quit. Factors that might contribute to a constructive discharge are:

   - A reduction in salary
   - Involuntary transfer to a less desirable location
   - A threat of termination
   - Encouragement to retire

Be sure that you do not take any of the above steps in an effort to have your officer voluntarily leave your employment. Follow your company's progressive disciplinary policy to the letter and

make sure you have documentation, signed by the officer, that proves you have followed those steps. For more on how to fire an employee and stay within the law check out this article by the SBA.

Terminating an officer poses potential legal liabilities for your company if you are not handling the process properly from the beginning–before you even make a hire. But there are other financial liabilities to consider, as well, when handling the termination process. Next, we'll talk about SUTA—the State Unemployment Tax Act. If SUTA is not something that is in the forefront of your mind in managing your company's costs and human resources, you need to start paying attention to it now. In the next section, I explain why.

HOW SUTA WORKS AND HOW TO KEEP YOUR SECURITY GUARD BILLING RATE LOW

How SUTA Works and How to Keep Your Security Guard Billing Rate Low

The first time that I saw the results of a bid where every bidder was required to submit their company costs (e.g. unemployment rate, uniform cost, workers comp) to show how their billing rate was calculated, I was shocked by my company's State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA) rate compared against some of the other bidders. I thought that something had to be wrong with our rate because it was noticeably higher than some of the other bidders'. So I did a little research and figured out how SUTA is calculated.

Although it is never pleasant to fire an officer, it's even worse if you fire one and then get penalized with a higher unemployment insurance rate for your trouble. Up until that time, I didn't have a formal process to accurately document security officer terminations—and I was paying the price with a high SUTA rate.

As a security guard company, if you don't terminate an officer for cause and with documentation to back it up, the state may award the officer some unemployment compensation, which will increase your SUTA rate. Understanding SUTA is critical: a higher SUTA rate directly increases your cost of doing business, making your bids less competitive and less profitable.

Here's what you need to know about how to control this unavoidable cost of doing business.

Only (or Mostly) Terminate for Clear Cause. Most employers pay into an unemployment fund, so if employees are laid off they can draw unemployment benefits, says Angela Saizan,

director of accounting at HR Solutions. As an employer, you really only want an employee to draw unemployment if you had no cause to let them go other than changing business needs, i.e. a layoff.

In some states, when you terminate an employee for cause, you send a notification to the state letting them know what happened. But this doesn't stop the employee from applying for unemployment benefits, Saizan says, and you may find yourself engaged in a lengthy appeals process.

Unfortunately and as we all know, there is no tried-and-true way to eliminate the chance of a security officer filing an unemployment claim. Francis Boustany, a human resources representative at HR Solutions, confirms this. However, he says that keeping the process civil can help. "Some people will file just to get back at the company after a termination, so make sure the termination isn't a surprise and goes as cordially as possible."

Establish Strong Disciplinary Procedures. One of the best ways to protect yourself against unemployment claims and mitigate the risk of a high SUTA rate is to ensure you have a clear disciplinary policy, as discussed above. A strong disciplinary procedure can deter security officers from filing false or frivolous claims.

Keep an Accurate Paper Trail

The best disciplinary procedure in the world is no good if you don't enforce it. Train your managers on how to effectively document disciplinary issues. Even if one of the steps in your progressive disciplinary policy is a verbal warning, managers should write down the date and time of the meeting, who attended the meeting with the officer, what was discussed and what the next steps will be.

Be explicit about what your officers can do to improve, David says, as that will create a record of the employer trying to help employees improve rather than simply trying to punish them.

Accurate documentation also includes meaningful annual reviews. If an officer is terminated for cause but has spotless annual reviews, that might raise red flags to the appeal board if there is a claim. Ensure managers document infractions as they happen, and that they prepare accurate annual reviews rather than just recording positive things to get through the process easily, he says. "The best practice is to be consistent and document everything."

I learned the hard way that when it comes to SUTA, the best offense is a good defense. If you do not currently have a program in place to manage your SUTA rate, you should implement one as soon as possible, as doing so will help cut your company's costs and make you more competitive in the bidding process.

While many of your HR policies will be geared toward protecting your company from legal and financial liability, you should also be thinking about protecting your officers so that they can be assured of a fair and safe workplace. Next, we will talk about a crucial issue¬–a strong sexual harassment policy.

A Strong Sexual Harassment Policy Is Crucial For Your Security Firm

Security firms are all about protection, and at the best firms, that mission applies to employees as well as clients. A key part of fulfilling that promise is a strong sexual harassment policy and program.

It can be tempting to think of this as just another regulatory box to check, but such programs can also help build a strong culture of support and respect in the workplace. "Whenever employees see that their employers take these issues seriously, it helps to build a culture of understanding and openness where employees can feel free to talk about their legitimate grievances and concerns about serious workplace issues," says Francis Boustany of consulting firm HR Solutions.

Here's how to create a sexual harassment program that will help your employees feel safe and respected.

Establish a sexual harassment policy. A strong sexual harassment policy includes:

1. A statement that outlines your zero-tolerance stance against it;
2. A description of what unlawful actions might include;
3. An outline of the procedures employees should follow if they want to file a report;
4. A commitment from the employer to investigate complaints promptly; and
5. A statement of protection against retaliation.

Growing companies in particular can benefit from making a sexual harassment policy a priority, Boustany says. You may have been so focused on growing your business that you haven't taken the time to create and share important HR policies, and they may have fallen by the wayside, he says. Look into the laws that cover you and your locations, as different jurisdictions may have different regulations. If you have locations in multiple cities or states, it's best to adopt the highest training standard for the entire workforce.

Communicate and train. Once you have a policy in place, share it with your employees in a systematic way, which means both covering it during onboarding and reinforcing that message in regular reminders. Don't forget to include a copy of the policy and reporting actions in your employee handbook.

You should also set aside time to train everyone on what sexual harassment is and how to avoid it. Boustany recommends one broad presentation for all employees at the organization and then a specific training for managers and supervisors. "Supervisors have more duties than non-supervisory employees in terms of noticing and stopping harassment," Boustany says. In addition, the company is likely exposed to more liability if a supervisor does not comply with the law.

Build a culture of respect. When done correctly, the work you put into a strong anti-harassment policy and training will end up being more than just an HR requirement. An anti-harassment policy can serve as an anchor for a broader company culture that is committed to respect in the workplace, Boustany says. "It creates an environment where there's a culture that doesn't accept harassment, there's an avenue to go through and have it addressed, and that helps employees emotionally."

To build a broader culture of respect, ensure supervisors understand their role in preventing harassment and that they must take it seriously. Consider an employee survey to determine whether they feel the company has a culture of respect. And if a sexual harassment accusation does come up, following your policy to the letter will prove your commitment to respect in the workplace.

Having a policy in place up front can save you a lot on the back end, Boustany says. While your business is focused on protection, don't forget to protect your employees and your business with a strong anti-sexual-harassment program.

The goal of your hiring process, performance reviews, disciplinary policy, and other HR policies you put in place to ensure a safe and fair workplace is to have officers who are capable, happy in their jobs, and motivated to provide the best service for your customers.

CHAPTER

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Do Customers Know The Value Of Your Security Services?

I've read a number of articles from various sources that underline the need for security guard companies to start measuring their services differently. Security guard service is not just about the guards—it is about demonstrating the value that those guards provide for your customers.

I have talked to many managers who have expressed some level of frustration that their clients don't fully appreciate what they do. Consequently, if clients don't appreciate the work that is being done, it is extremely hard to assign a fair value for those services. In today's data-driven world, security guard companies need to focus on providing their customers with metrics that help demonstrate that value. So how do you show value to customers?

Examples of Demonstrating Value

Here are several examples of security organizations capturing and sharing information with their clients that demonstrates the value of their services.

Example 1. In a recent post in a LinkedIn discussion group, this was written about the security manager of a large manufacturing firm:

> His CEO had recently called him into his office, where he was told that he was going to be required to make significant cuts to his operating budget. His boss said, "Why don't you get back to me in a week with your recommendations." The Security Director promptly went to his computer and developed

an itemized list of the proactive actions his security officers had taken over the past three years. The list included things such as: 125 doors found unlocked and secured; removed trespassers and homeless people from the property 35 times; escorted female employees to their cars 184 times. The list had somewhere around 50 items that documented the affirmative actions of his security force. He didn't wait for a week to get back to the CEO. He returned in less than an hour.

He laid the list on the CEO's desk, and stated: "Which of these things do you want me to stop doing?" Essentially his boss smiled, and said "get out of here," and no cuts were made that year."

Example 2. The Isanti County News recently published an article that again demonstrates the power of providing metrics for security officer activities. As explained in this article, the security force was able to outline their accomplishments over the course of just several months. The security force checked in 43,453 people and turned away three people with guns. They also turned away 1,438 knives, 121 hazardous tools, 67 cans of pepper spray, 43 pairs of scissors, and four Tasers. After seeing those numbers, the client went on to say, "I never thought this many people visit the government center." If you are not capturing and reporting the activities that your officers are providing, you are missing huge opportunities to demonstrate the value of your service.

Example 3. In another article, which featured Giddens Security Corporation, the writer details how Giddens was responsible for greeting 465,637 visitors and snagging 10,360 potentially dangerous items. Those items included knives, scissors, pepper spray, and guns. Again, the power that those metrics provide are invaluable to building your company's brand and showing the value that your services provide.

Metrics That Show Value

In order to demonstrate the value that your company provides, you will need to capture information in a manner that allows for easy access and accounting. Paper-based reporting systems are not flexible or efficient enough to facilitate this type of reporting. Security Guard Reporting systems such as OfficerReports.com provide their users with a more efficient way of reporting on security officer activities. Here is a short list of metrics that you should be providing to your clients on a regular basis:

- Number of incidents, types, and trends
- Numbers of lights found not working
- Doors found unlocked or unsecured
- Employees being escorted
- Fire extinguishers checked
- Number of vehicles logged
- Number of visitors checked in
- Maintenance issues found
- Fire hazards found
- Recovered value of stolen items
- Slips, trips, falls, and near misses
- Tour stops completed

With these metrics in hand, you can easily convey to your clients the value that your security officers are providing for them. Although being humble is an admirable trait, humility is not good for your business. Tell your current clients and prospective clients all about what you do and how you deliver value.

As a security guard business, the service you provide to your customers may be more valuable to them than they realize, which means a missed opportunity for your company to demonstrate

that they really are getting a lot of bang for their buck. Ideally, you want your customers to view you as more than just another vendor, interchangeable with vendors of the same service. You want them to see you more as a partner in their business and a valuable resource.

VENDOR   PARTNER

Bridging The Gap Between Security Vendor And Partner

In today's business environment, where resources are scarce and sometimes non-existent, how do your customers find answers to the challenges that they face? If they have the time, they might try searching the internet or posting questions on sites such as Quora or LinkedIn—all of which can provide great answers—but would your customers ever consider using your company as a resource? If not, chances are they see you as just a security vendor.

Consider this: you probably have clients that are fairly similar and have faced and solved many of the same types of challenges. So, if your customers aren't leveraging you as a resource, both you and your customers are missing a huge opportunity. Here are a couple of great examples of how I have seen clients tap their vendor networks to help solve some of their challenges.

Security Vendor To The Rescue

Shortly after winning a new security guard contract, the company that I was with had a conversation with that client about tracking and managing incidents at the facility. At that time, they were tracking incidents manually—a labor intensive and very inefficient process. As a result of that conversation, we decided to introduce them to Lauren Innovations. We discovered Lauren Innovations after having a conversation with another client who had also been dealing with the growing costs of incident tracking. After we made the introduction, the client went on to become a Lauren Innovations client. They were very happy with Lauren's solution and with our company for making that introduction.

Who Goes There?

At one security guard company I worked with, many of our longest standing relationships were with academic institutions. Subsequently, we'd had the opportunity to become well aware of the challenges facing school administrators and their staff. At one point, one of these academic institutions asked how our other clients were tracking student attendance and visitors on campus. Because the customer used us as a resource, we were able to introduce them to Hero K12. Hero K12 had been providing our other customers with a solution that more than met the needs of this client. In fact, the client went on to roll out Hero K12's software at several of their campuses. Again, that was a win for Hero K12 as well as our company.

What It Means to Be A Partner

Sales Performance International has a very succinct way of explaining what it means to become a partner with your customers. In summary, being a partner means that you are seen as a long-term partner whose contributions and insights are viewed as key to your customer's long-term success. Although achieving that type of relationship with all of your customers is unlikely, the ability to provide both security non-security-related contributions enhances your value in your customer's eyes.

So if you have not already done so, begin making a concerted effort to understand your customers' challenges and how they can overcome them. Sharing that information could make a world of difference when that low-cost competitor comes knocking on your customer's door because they will see that you are not necessarily interchangeable with another security company.

By showing your customer the value that you are providing them through security-related activities and demonstrating that you can provide value beyond that, becoming a partner rather than a vendor, you can gain a competitive advantage over other companies that might come courting your top clients. So what else can you do to keep your clients and reel in new ones in a competitive market? One of the biggest things is customer service.

GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Is Your New

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

★★★★★

Great Customer Service Is Your New Competitive Advantage

In the security guard industry, where low price bidders continue to drive down billing rates, companies are increasingly looking for ways to develop a competitive advantage. In this industry, there are six main ways to build a competitive advantage:

1. Brand recognition;
2. Corporate reputation;
3. Access to capital;
4. Low pricing;
5. Ability to innovate; and
6. Superior customer service.

Of these six, **superior customer service** is the most immediately attainable and impactful.

It is a common misperception that pricing is the most critical factor in determining whether your customers stay or leave. But research continues to show that customer service is generally the most pivotal component of a customer's decision to leave. So let's look at what it takes to wow your customers with customer service.

Making Customer Service A Competitive Advantage

In order to make customer service a competitive advantage, we first need to understand what it is. Even though the term customer service has no universal definition, *customer service* is usually

implemented according to one of three models. These models are generally determined by the level of involvement and commitment to the customer service plan.

Customer service as a task. This particular model of customer service treats the customer service function as a set of specific tasks that need to be performed to appease customers. At this level of involvement, departments are assigned to handle customer issues and complaints.

Customer service as a metric. This customer service model focuses on evaluating customer service based on metrics. These metrics may include measurements such as the percentage of positive surveys or client retention rate. While this model is better than treating customer service as a task, in order to make it a competitive advantage your company needs to see past the metrics. It is critical that you ensure that the metrics are leveraged into creating satisfied customers. Satisfied customers are the only way to truly achieve overall success.

Customer service as a mantra. When you adopt great customer service as a mantra, it elevates the customer service responsibility across your entire company. It also helps ensures that everyone is focused on achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction. When customer service becomes a mantra, your whole organization becomes committed to the idea of providing great customer service as a part of every process. Every department will begin to focus on developing ways to ensure a great customer experience when dealing with clients.

If you commit to making customer service your competitive advantage, here are a few tips that are applicable to every department within your organization:

1. Always empathize with your customers if they are encountering issues.
2. Always show your appreciation for your customer's continued business.
3. Make it easy for your customers to reach any level or person within your organization.
4. Ensure that *every* interaction that you have with your customers is authentic and receives a personal touch.

If your organization is truly committed to making customer service your competitive advantage, ensure that every interaction with your customers adds benefit to the relationship and maximizes its value.

It would be nice if customer service were always about your company being the good guy who helps your customer by demonstrating your value and being a partner in problem solving. However, there will be times when an officer makes a mistake. When this happens, you need to be prepared to respond in a way that demonstrates to your customer your commitment to providing excellent service and value.

Your Security Officer Screwed Up...Now What?

I remember several times sitting at a table with a member from my operations department talking with an angry client about a mistake one of our security officers had made. In most of those cases, I also remember the operations manager doing a really poor job of handling the situation. Below, you will find the steps that I suggest you take in talking with a client about a security officer's mistake.

First, let's be clear: screw-ups can occur at any time. However, in your case a security officer making a mistake can prove to be very costly for your clients—particularly since many security company clients pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for your officers to protect millions of dollars of assets. Because of that, it is only right that you, as the owner or manager, be the person to apologize for these mistakes. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when apologizing to your customers if your security officer has made a mistake:

Relax. The first step you need to take is to relax. Often, security officer managers spend far too much time thinking about how to approach the client with their apology. This delay may cause the problem to be blown out of proportion. Of course, you cannot guess how the client will react, but that doesn't mean you should take ages to apologize. Don't delay it until it's too late to apologize.

Be humble and personal. It is very important that you are humble when you apologize. Make sure that you acknowledge that there has in fact been a mistake. Otherwise, it becomes difficult for the client to accept your apology as sincere and heartfelt. At

the same time, make the apology personal. It is usually best to apologize in person, or over the phone since that is at least more of a personal interaction than an email.

Provide a valid reason for the security officer's mistake. Make it clear to the client how and why the security officer screwed up. It is convenient to make up any number of excuses and try to sweep the problem under the rug. And more often than not, the client will accept that excuse and apology. However, that is the wrong course of action. The proper way is to provide a true and valid reason. If a mistake was made, there is probably a perfectly valid and understandable reason for it. If you or the officer simply dropped the ball, be honest, because honesty will go a long way in building trusting client relationships.

Don't just blame the security officer.

When apologizing, it might be easy to just say that you are sorry that the client feels angry about what happened, as if their anger was the problem. When the real problem is that your officer made a mistake and you have to own it. But in owning it, remember it will be bad for your client relationship if you just try to pass the buck on to your security officers. You cannot assure a client that something like this will not occur again unless you take complete responsibility for it.

Provide a solution. The best way to diffuse the situation is providing a solution. This can be in the form of a special discount, additional services, retraining, or something that you can offer to the client as a token of apology. Keep in mind that it is better to come up with a solution as soon as possible so that the client doesn't feel resentful for too long. For example, in cases where the officer failed to submit a timely security officer incident report, propose going over to digital reporting. Once you have accepted

fault, half the problem has been taken care of. The rest you can fix by providing a solution.

Many people are afraid to admit that there is a problem because they are afraid that they will lose the client because of it. Your clients realize that security officers are people, and people are prone to making mistakes. But as long as you have apologize properly by following the steps above, chances are your client will stick around.

For obvious reasons, keeping your customers happy by demonstrating to them the true value of the service you provide them and your commitment to meeting their needs is key. To do that, though you need to make sure you really are providing the best quality service, and the quality of your service all comes down to how well you manage your field operations, and good deal of that rests on the quality of your post orders.

CHAPTER

FIELD OPERATIONS
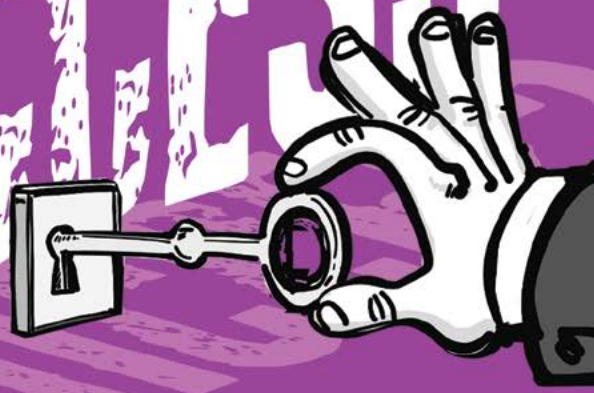
Post Orders—Key to Success or Just Unnecessary Paper?

So, are post orders key to successfully providing security guard service or just unnecessary paperwork that your clients want? Hopefully, you already know that your post orders are the foundation for successfully servicing your security guard customers. If you don't know, check out this presentation by Brian Taylor, "Post Order Design, Development, and Implementation," to find out why.

Although the contract between you and your client addresses topics such as when and how many officers are needed at the site, it is the site post orders that detail the specific duties that your officers should be performing. For instance, the contract may require that your security officers be responsible for monitoring and operating a magnetometer. But it is the post orders that will specify which items are considered contraband and what the officer should do when contraband is spotted.

I have always considered site post orders to be the first step toward ensuring client satisfaction. In fact, for every new security guard contract that I won, I would ask the client to name three things that our officers need to accomplish for them consider the contract successful. Whatever those three things were, I ensured that they were translated into actionable steps within the site's post orders. As a rule, all of your clients' expectations of your security officers should be spelled out clearly and concisely in the post orders, allowing no room for unnecessary discretion.

How Often Do You Update Your Post Orders?

Because post orders are so important, they should be considered a living document that is routinely updated and accessible by all of your security officers. As a policy, you should be reviewing and updating your post orders at least annually. If you aren't updating your post orders regularly, it's probably because it is an onerous task to review, update, and distribute any changes. I once had a customer tell me that he had to change one page of his post orders for four sites. After he made the change, he printed out four pages and gave them to a field supervisor to deliver. That process, including delivery, took more than FOUR hours. After hearing that story, we developed a Post Order feature for our Security Guard Reporting Software that allows our customers to upload any changes in their post orders to OfficerReports.com and distribute them to their officers instantaneously. Cool, right?

So are post orders key to your success or more unnecessary paperwork? The answer is that they are definitely keys to your success if you combine them with regular testing and frequent updates.

Give Your Guards Post Orders Tests Over The Web

Development of your post orders is just the first step in ensuring high-quality security guard service. But having great post orders means nothing if your officers don't know and understand them. To get your officers that understanding, a proper site orientation given by a capable supervisor is essential. Additionally, continuous and ongoing testing of your officers' understanding of your post orders should become a part of your standard procedures.

So how can you ensure that your officers are knowledgeable about their site's post orders? To get your officers that understanding, a proper site orientation given by a capable supervisor is essential. Additionally, continuous and ongoing testing of your officers' understanding of your post orders should become a part of your standard procedures. As more and more security guard vendors begin to distribute smart devices a their client sites, this is just another example of how those devices can be leveraged further.

I previously wrote an article titled "Give Your Guards Post Orders Tests Over The Web for FREE," but I have since found a more suitable resource for testing. That resource is Onlineexambuilder.com.

Onlineexambuilder.com allows you to quickly build and deploy online exams that your officers can take from anywhere. If you have computers or smart devices at your clients' sites or a field supervisor with a smart device, you should definitely look into this resource. If you are on a tight budget there is even a free plan that you can sign up for. But to get the most out of this resource, you should probably opt for the Smart Owl plan at $20/month.

With Onlineexambuilder.com you can:

- Manage your users
- Choose an exam type
- Customize the exam
- Access real-time reporting
- View insights and statistics
- Embed exams on your company website

To see an example of what the exam looks like, I took about 15 minutes to design the following exam:

Acme Residential Post Orders Test

With a little creativity, the possibilities with Onlineexambuilder.com are endless. I wish I'd had this resource when I was selling security guard services!

SECURITY GUARD EQUIPMENT CHOICES FOR YOUR COMPANY

Security Guard Equipment Choices for Your Company

As a security guard company, one of the many choices that you have to make from day one is how to equip your officers. When I think about security guard equipment, I think of three categories. Those categories are:

1. Uniforms
2. Essential Equipment
3. Training

Uniforms

When it comes to uniforming your officers, there are 1000s of choices that you need to make. Those choices include uniform type, material, quality, and the vendor that you will use.

Uniform type. There are three basic types of uniforms for security officers: hard, soft, and tactical. Hard uniforms are the most common uniforms that security officers wear. It is the military or police look uniform. The soft uniform is the second most recognized type of uniform. It usually consists of a sport coat, tie, white shirt, and dress slacks. It is the preferred uniform for officers fulfilling more of a customer service role.

The tactical uniform is the least seen type of uniform, and for good reason. Tactical uniforms usually consist of black battle dress uniform (BDUs) or some variant. Usually, newer firms choose these uniforms. Most of those companies haven't figured out that security isn't law enforcement or the military.

Initial cost. One of the main factors determining what uniform you will choose is cost. There are myriad brands that you can choose, ranging from no-name brands to popular names such as Elbeco (my personal favorite). When it comes to uniforms, keep in mind that you get what you pay for.

Vendor. There are hundreds of uniform vendors to choose from. I've had a chance to work with low-cost retailers such as Uniform Warehouse and higher quality retailers such as Unitex Direct. Although using a low-cost retailer may work well for smaller companies, companies such as Unitex Direct provide services that low-cost retailers do not. A great example of this is Unitex Direct's ability to develop an online store that carries all your company's uniforms. By using the customized online store, you can easily place an order and have items shipped within 48 hours.

Maintenance Program. Although most frontline security officers love having a great looking uniform, I will tell you that few will invest their own money in keeping the uniform looking good. As a result, you must decide how to address the cost of replacing those uniforms. There are three schools of thought here:

1. Make the officer pay for their own;
2. Build the cost of replacement uniforms into your customer's billing rate; and
3. Directly bill the customer for the cost of replacement uniforms.

Each option has its own benefits and drawbacks, which we won't discuss here.

Essential Security Guard Equipment

Less Than Lethal. With the number of stories in the news about police officer and security officer involved shootings, developing a less-than-lethal strategy should be a priority for your company. Tools such as Guardian 8's Pro V2 add a layer of defensive capability that has not been available until recently.

Body Cameras. Because of all the conversations happening in the news about body cameras, they are probably something that you are considering. Having the ability to accurately capture incidents as they occur is critical in our litigious society. If you are having a conversation about body cameras, then you should include the Pro V2 in that conversation because of its ability to capture high quality video. Last but not least, with the availability of video recorders on most mobile devices, when paired with incident reporting software, smartphones and tablets become a viable option, as well.

Communications. Previously, because of the cost of smartphones and the associated monthly costs, they could not be considered as standard security guard equipment. But as the cost of mobile devices and their monthly plans continue to decline, including a mobile device has become a requirement at all of your sites.

Training

Although you may not agree with including training as security guard equipment, I see it as being exactly the same. After all, you price training into your billing rate just like any other equipment, and it is also the most important thing to equip your officers with. Without training on what is expected of them, nothing else really matters. In order to deliver that training to most of your

officers, who probably work remotely, you should be looking into leveraging online training and testing platforms such as Onlineexambuilder.com.

When you carefully consider the options that you have and the implications of your choices, you can best position your company for success. I have seen many companies poorly design their uniform programs, provide their officers with inadequate hard equipment, and conduct even less training. Those companies are usually not around long, so choose carefully.

Security Guard Management Software. As a security guard company, you know how much information your officers produce. That information includes daily activity reports, incident reports, field inspections, time sheets, and tour tracking information, just to name a few. If you are still using paper for reports, a wand for tour tracking, and paper timesheets—the 90s called and they want all their stuff back. Using tools such as OfficerReports.com helps modern organizations drive efficiency by easily collecting, collating, and distributing that information to the appropriate people.

If you are currently using paper reports, how do you know if your company needs to move to security guard management software? The next section will answer many of your questions.

DO YOU REALLY NEED SECURITY GUARD MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE?
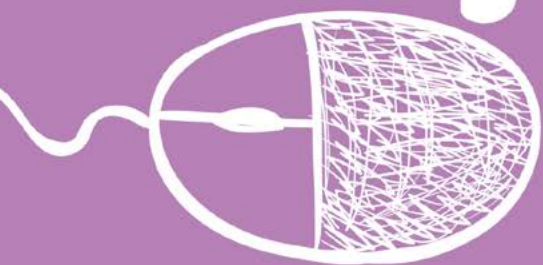
Do You Really Need Security Guard Management Software?

If you are a security guard company with more than five security officers, the answer is an unequivocal **"yes!"**

But before I talk about why you need it, let me take a moment to define exactly what security guard management software is. Security guard management software is a suite of software products that allow security guard companies to better manage their officers and overall operations. That suite should at a minimum provide electronic reporting software, security guard tour tracking software, and time and attendance software. The software should provide just about everything that you need to effectively operate a security guard company.

If you are a manager or supervisor for a security guard company, you know how much time it takes to manage officer reports, ensure officers are doing their patrols, get payroll and billing done, and accomplish myriad other tasks on a daily basis. Security guard management software is designed to help automate many of those processes. Through that automation, ultimately you are able to provide a higher quality of service to your customers.

Top 3 Reasons For Using Security Guard Management Software

From my experience managing and selling security guard service for more than a decade, I have seen the need for this type of

software increase dramatically. I have also found that this increase is a function of three primary factors:

1. The need for security companies to become more operationally efficient;
2. The need to match the service offerings of large national providers; and
3. Because security guard service buyers want this type of software.

Increased operational efficiency. Using security guard management software greatly improves your ability to be more responsive to your customers' and your organization's operational needs. We recently conducted a survey that shows that 90% of our customers felt that using OfficerReports.com's security management software helped them operate more efficiently. We attribute this increase in our customers' efficiency to 4 things:

1. The ability to review, edit, and approve reports online prior to their being distributed to their customers
2. The ability to have incident reports emailed to their customers and supervisors instantaneously
3. The ability to use Tour Tracking Software to verify that their officers are doing patrols in real-time without having to be on site
4. The ability to create schedules online that their officers can view from a computer or smart device from anywhere in the world

Compete with the national providers. I have talked with an increasing number of small- to medium-sized security guard companies who have recently lost contracts to large national firms. Each of these companies has similar stories in that they

were unable to provide some of the technologies that the large firms are using as differentiators.

Because of their financial resources, most of the large security guard firms have developed proprietary security guard management software that enables them to provide a higher quality of service. Unfortunately, most small- to medium- sized security companies don't have those same resources, so they are not been able to compete with the national firms' technology. But by using software like OfficerReports.com, smaller security guard companies can now match the capabilities of the larger firms at a fraction of the price.

Your customers want it. Did you know that according to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 87% of American adults use the internet? When those adults are online, they aren't just playing Candy Crush or updating their Facebook statuses. Many are conducting business-related or even banking-related activity. In fact, Pew research also shows that 51% of U.S. adults are now banking online. People trust online resources and also depend on the ability to access information online. With that being the case, why would it be any different for the information that your customers are receiving from your security officers? It isn't.

Your customers want fast and easy access to that information online. And please don't think that they don't want that ability just because they aren't asking for it. If you think otherwise, just ask Tony Castillo, Jr. He provided security guard service to one of his customers for 14 years—until he lost the contract to G4S. According to his client, G4S won the contract due to "administrative enhancements they provide and management efficiencies as a result of some innovative technologies."

Security guard management software such as OfficerReports. com is also great tool for enhancing performance, accountability, and relationships between primary security guarding companies and their subcontractors for large and complex service agreements. In the next section, I will lay out the benefits of security guard management software for both primes and subs.

Security Guard Management Software: Great For Primes and Subs[1]

I've been fortunate over the course of my career to have served in key leadership roles with multiple nationally leading security providers and to have worked with several outstanding subcontracting companies as business partners. Several of these contractual relationships were very substantial, entailing fees of millions of dollars annually and thousands of billable hours weekly. Based on those experiences, I know how vital it is that prime contractors have visibility into the operations of their subcontractors.

Public sector (municipal, state, and federal) contracts, in particular, routinely require the participation of minority, women, and disadvantaged business enterprises (MBE, WBE, DBE). The bidding and/or proposal process for these contracts is highly competitive and leaves no margin for error. Consequently, choice of strategic partnerships for these opportunities, by both prime and sub, must be made carefully to ensure ongoing compatibility between the companies, achieving the RFP/RFB requirements, and realizing the financial goals of each company.

The benefits of implementing security guard management software as part of these relationships are substantial.

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[1] A version of this section was previously published by Al Ricketts of OfficerReports, LLC

Benefits For The Primary Contractor

Running security guard management software makes managing subcontractors much easier.

- As a prime, requiring or facilitating the subcontractor's use of software that employs on-line, real-time technology for reporting, tour tracking, and employee timekeeping provides with immediate monitoring of the subcontractor's performance. There is no delay in waiting for handwritten reports or after-the-fact downloaded tour confirmation details and no substantiating the accuracy of outdated personnel

- timekeeping methods. Your subs' use of this type of software puts the ability to log in and review records in real-time at your management team's fingertips.

- You commonly serve as the "face" of the combined team. As a result, you are typically the one that receives the client's calls and inquiries, and you frequently have to substantiate the performance of both companies during the term of the contract. This immediate electronic record of reporting, tour activity, and timekeeping is a critical tool to demonstrate and substantiate to a questioning client that they are indeed receiving the quality of service and execution of tasks that the contract requires.

Benefits For The Subcontractor

As a subcontractor, security guard management software makes your business more attractive to primary contractors and gives you an edge in being selected for the contract.

- Employing such technology provides immediate accountability. Through this accountability of good

performance, your business relationships with your primary contractors are strengthened and can be **expanded**.

- You enhance your market value as a desired business partner for other RFP/RFB opportunities in this highly competitive business environment.

Whether you are a primary or a subcontractor, employing security guard management software improves your operational performance in several ways.

1. By eliminating time-consuming payroll tasks: collecting handwritten reports, verifying guard tours, reviewing outdated employee time and attendance monitoring, etc.
2. That improvement in operations will also contribute to client retention.
3. It facilitates your ability to leverage direct operating costs and enhance gross margins and profitability.
4. It is an important asset in your sales strategy to make you more competitive and attractive in the tough arena of the RFP/RFB process.

Security guard management software can make you a better partner when working with larger, primary contractors and can make your business run more smoothly and efficiently when you require your subs to use it. But even if you are not working with a primary or subcontractor, using security guard management software can save you a lot of headaches and offers myriad benefits for both you and your customers.

Security guard management software is one of the greatest assets that small- to medium-sized security guard companies can have. It allows you to provide higher quality services in a way

that wasn't previously possible. Better yet, it can also help you to retain your current customers as well as win new ones. If you are interested in seeing how OfficerReports.com's Security Guard Management Software can help your company, please feel free to contact us.

RESOURCES

Free Ebooks

All The Things No One Told You About Selling Security Guard Services
http://eepurl.com/bqb6dv

42 Amazing Free Tools For Your Security Guard Company
http://eepurl.com/bymlFH

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Officerreports.com Products

Security Officer Report Writing Software
http://www.officerreports.com/products.html

Now you security officers can be mobile but always connected and communicating. By using our Security Officer Report Writing Software App, you and your clients will have instant access to the officer's reports whenever and wherever you need them.

Real-Time Officer Tour Tracking Software
http://www.officerreports.com/guard-tour-tracking-software.html

Guard tour tracking software helps monitor the time and activity of your security guards while they are performing patrols at their sites.

Time and Attendance Software
http://www.officerreports.com/time-and-attendance.html

Create schedules online and let your officers check their schedules from anywhere. You can also monitor the times that your officers are clocking in and out from their sites.

Technology Bundle
http://www.officerreports.com/technology-bundle.html

OfficerReports.com is teaming up with one of the nation's top telecom companies to provide you with easy and affordable access to the software and hardware that you need to manage your security officers. OfficerReports. com is now providing smartphones and tablets that ship directly to you with the OfficerReports.com Reporting Software and Tour Tracking Software already installed.