

Finding The Right Security Partner

When talking about property management, selecting a security firm means property managers have to make the right decision.

By: Sam Barrett

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No one wants an unwelcome guest, especially when that 'guest' is roaming your property because your security guard is asleep at his (or her) station. When intruders gain access to your building because of lax security, you may find that you have more than one unwelcome guest within your premises: the security guard and the security threat.

In order to prevent your security set up from being a concern for both you and your tenants—you must do your due diligence. That means making sure that you have done your research before you select a security firm. After all, security companies should be partners in monitoring a facility, which means that you should take full advantage of on-site personnel as well as security technology.

Finding a Match

Identifying the right business partner may not be an easy process but giving the decision due consideration can go a long way toward a building a lasting and valued business relationship.

"The vendor that you do choose, not only has to be respected, but someone you like," says Gary Kutty, chief executive officer of Kutty & Associates, LLC, a Dayton, Ohio-based security consulting firm. "If you don't trust your vendor that probably means you should be looking for another vendor."

Selecting a Firm

When selecting a security company, look at regional or local companies and how long they have been in business, since it is an indication of the firm's stability and ability to do its job. "The best indicator of future performance is past performance, which is why it's so important to check and confirm references" Kutty says.

Odds are if the company has been in business for a while, it has a business license, even though some states may not require it. It's usually a good idea to, ask for a copy of the company's business license regardless of state regulation. "Any reputable company would give you a copy of their state license," states Kutty. In addition to being licensed, make sure the company carries the appropriate amount of general liability and umbrella insurance from a reputable insurance provider.

If all the paperwork is in order and the short list of security vendors has been solidified, schedule a visit. Make sure to see not only the company's offices, but also the offices and properties of their clients as well. "It's usually part of the process: show me some of the work you've done," explains Kevin Williams, vice president of national accounts for Protection One Inc., a national security systems provider based in Lawrence, Kan. "It helps [the client] visualize a complete solution." While visiting the client site, pay attention to how the on-site security guards present themselves, as well as the security systems

After a site visit, let the security company visit your property and work with the vendor to determine which security approach is best and in line with the specific needs of the property. When considering security systems, keep in mind that the security solutions available can be used to keep intruders off your property, as well as help with managing the facilities. A security system with video monitoring can also be used to help manage the property by monitoring the general activity of the property. "Reputable companies in our industry provide more than just intrusion services these days," says Jamie Brennan, vice president of commercial sales for Protection One.

If the needs of the property require on-site personnel, find out what kind of training their guards receive. Again, the regulations for guard training vary from state-to-state and some states may not have any regulations for guard training. "Only a handful of states have mandated training," Kutty says. In addition to knowing what training the guards receive, Kutty suggests finding out if background checks are performed.

If the security guards are trained appropriately, make sure they are also paid appropriately. According to Kutty, a lower wage may mean higher turnover and less stability in the on-site security staff. "I don't think the security officer should be paid any less than the lowest paid member of your organization," he explains.



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