



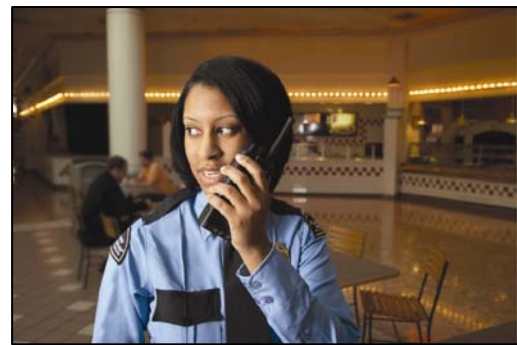
Local Response | National Support

What to Look for When Selecting a Security Provider

By Bob Chartier, Vice President of Business Development, AlliedBarton Security Services

Corporate executives, health and safety managers, industrial hygienists, engineers, personnel managers and anyone interested in worker health and safety are asking what one should look for when selecting a security provider. More and more, companies are placing a heightened focus on their core competencies and outsourcing support functions not associated with their primary business. This move to outsource is especially prevalent in the area of personnel-related support functions, which include security services.

Many organizations routinely entrust the security of their employees and physical assets to contract security providers to ensure an up-to-date and comprehensive program is in place. Using a third-party provider for security purposes protects employees and assets, saves money and allows the company to devote its attention and resources to its core competencies. Choosing a security provider is an



important decision that demands special care is paid to some vital issues. I believe there are six important key issues to assess when selecting your security services partner. These include:

Partnering Mindset – Determine if the security services company maintains site security standards that address the client’s mission, culture and priorities. Today’s quality contract security providers must be customer-centric and, as a result, focused on the clients’ needs and mission; employee-centric and concerned with their own employees’ needs and aspirations; industry-centric and aware of new developments and solutions in physical security; and improvement-centric with a focus on improving their operating model, efficiencies and value.

Health and safety professionals require a security provider that focuses on recruiting the best people by screening for quality and suitability; providing meaningful employee benefits; and creating an environment that fosters learning and advancement. An empowered and dedicated account management team, and relevant and objective performance metrics and reporting processes, ensure the security partner you choose is committed to being a “continuous improvement partner.”

Employee Retention – Every company would love to employ the best, most experienced security professionals. Quality security companies make that happen by establishing employee retention programs and a culture of excellence. Security officers and managers who are motivated, appreciated and competitively compensated are loyal to both their employer and their job site. Companies who truly believe in and support security as a career, retain the best employees. As you are reviewing security services firms, inquire about the potential provider’s turnover rates locally and nationally. The national turnover average for security officers is 200-percent per year. A high quality security services provider will experience turnover rates in the 50- to 60-percent range.

Benefits = Long-Term, Dedicated Employees— An outstanding benefits package plays a large role in retention of long-term, dedicated employees. For security personnel, the benefits plan should be meaningful and affordable. At a minimum, security officers should be offered benefits that include medical, dental and life insurance, vacation and a 401 (k) plan. Request details of benefit offerings, including cost to employees (i.e., is family coverage offered as an option?). Ask the potential provider about use of part-time employees as some companies avoid benefit costs by primarily using part-time employees.

Commitment to Training – It is important for security services firms to train their employees to be prepared in the course of their duties while also readying them for future roles in management. Properly trained officers function with confidence, are dedicated to their sites, and are satisfied with their work. The best security officer firms train their officers because it is essential to servicing the clients, to retaining the best employees, and in building a culture of excellence. Be sure to ask about the provider's investment in training infrastructure.

While the individual site requirements and expectations will determine the depth of training required, find out if the provider maintains a corporate training department for development of programs. If so, is that training augmented by external resources?

Does the provider have regional and/or local training specialists? Is there a focus on professional development of all personnel? How accessible is the training to field personnel? Is there evidence of promotion from within the organization?

Have training programs been developed for market-specific applications and/or compliance with governmental regulations? CFATS compliance is vital for the chemical and petrochemical sectors while JCHAO compliance plays a major role for healthcare. The Clery Act for Campus Safety impacts higher education security standards.

Will the provider take ownership of the development of the Site Operations Procedures Manual (SOPM)? The SOPM should be detailed and organized as a key reference and provide listings of internal and external contacts in case of an emergency. SOPM is a work product paid for by the client and should be retained at site even when a change in provider is made.

Client-Centric Site Organization – There should be a single, local point of contact responsible and accountable to the client. Smaller sites (with less than 500 hours per week) may be overseen by a local office-based "roving" account or operations manager. Larger sites (with more than 500 hours per week) demand oversight by a dedicated account manager. The account manager will ensure consistency in staffing, staff support, training, coordination of all on-site events and client communication.

Management Support - How is the local organization structured? Is there adequate support for key functions? Is the training administered by designated trainers? How are the administrative functions of benefits, human resources and invoicing managed? How is the staff support maintained with supervision, equipment access and uniforms? Are there off-hours management inspections of sites? Is the proposed provider actively engaged in pertinent local and national business organizations? These associations illustrate the provider's interest and investment in business development and in relationships. The International Facility Management Association, Building Owners and Managers Association and American Society for Industrial Security are important organizations that your security provider should be active with.

The security industry in particular is one personnel-support function that has become extremely specialized. An effective security program is no longer comprised of an officer in a uniform. In today's environment, a high quality security program includes comprehensive training programs with market specific curriculums that include technology-based training for access control systems and emergency evacuation planning.

Many Security Directors are concerned that by moving to a contract provider they will have less direct control over the program. However, a shift to contract security can have the opposite effect. Security Directors who outsource their security program often find they no longer have to spend long hours dealing with the day-to-day management of security officers and instead are able to utilize their skills in the more prominent and visible areas of security consulting, planning and analysis. This increases their value to the company while decreasing their security-related headaches as they can defer security personnel functions to the contract security firm's management team.

Hesitation to utilize a contract security company can also be due to the perception of a decrease in quality. There are companies who operate on a very high level. These companies conduct extensive background checks and have a rigorous process for personnel selection. Quality companies offer superior management, benchmark-setting training, and employee-development programs. In addition, switching to contract security does not mean losing your well-established security force. Contract companies generally retain as many of the qualified, existing staff members as the client desires.

Making the *Right* Choice

There are many national and regional providers and it is important to find one that best fits your needs. The following steps will help ensure the company you select will be a long-time partner and resource:

- **Build a Selection Team** – The members of a selection team vary depending on the market but typical participants include representatives from purchasing, building management and security. If individual departments or functional areas have different security needs, participants from those areas will offer valuable insight as well.
- **Identify Needed Improvements** – Reviewing your current program will help to identify areas in need of improvement. In some cases, those needs may have prompted the search for a contract security provider. Either way now is the time to ask for what you want and need.
- **Prioritize Objectives** – Your identified areas of improvements and any other security needs should be prioritized and your objectives communicated to potential security partners. Knowing your objectives in advance will help you select a firm that can meet your needs.
- **Consult the Experts** – Once you've communicated your objectives, ask potential providers to make security recommendations. These are the experts and their advice and capabilities will influence your decision.
- **Create the RFP** – Your request for proposal should include questions on a variety of topics. General company information to specific training and experience in your industry

will help to paint the picture and will organize the information. Gathering the facts from all potential providers will allow you to make a side-by-side comparison.

- **Narrow the Field** – Select the best two to three firms and request any additional and necessary information, delve deeper into their day-to-day processes and meet with the managers who will be overseeing your program.
- **Find the Right Experience** – While every security program is unique, identifying a provider with the right type of experience is an important step in identifying the best provider for you. A contract security company with extensive higher education experience and training specific to the needs of the education market, for example, will be a strong candidate for a college or university.
- **Select a Provider** – Once you've selected a provider, meet with them to develop a contract, plans and processes. Dedicate the time to work with them to provide the information needed to develop a quality program and post orders specific to your needs.

A successful relationship with a contract security provider is one based on trust, mutual goals and communication. Establish goals and objectives for both you and your contract provider and participate in regular reviews of the new security program in order to recognize milestones, make adjustments and recognize the exemplary efforts of the security staff.

A high quality contract security provider is one who views security as a team effort and truly believes in and is dedicated to the safety and security of your employees and assets. That commitment will be evident in the company's practices and training programs, as well as their ability to customize services to meet your individual needs.

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For more information call 1-866-825-5433 or visit AlliedBarton.com

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