Putting security in the spotlight

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In this article the author provides instructions and advice about getting the word out about Security via an in-house newsletter, security workshops, and special programs.

Since the terrorist attacks hit our shore on September 11, 2001, the security industry stepped-up to the plate and began making man-sized advances in protective technologies from locks to surveillance systems, to anti-theft devices used in retail stores keeping internal theft under control, in hospital maternity wards keeping babies safe, and on our borders performing immigration-related surveillance services. It’s obviously great to have this new treasure-trove of protective technology at our fingertips, but this would be all for naught if we failed to get the security word out to the audience we protect and serve.

THE ABCS OF SECURITY NETWORKING

Publishing An In-House Newsletter

There are a few options that a security administrator can consider to help get security-related information into the hands of every employee in every depart-
ment. First and foremost it’s extremely important that this information is provided in an easy to read newsletter. Some seasoned and knowledgeable administrators already publish an in-house monthly or quarterly newsletter filled with recently published articles and related items of interest; others contract with outside firms that specialize in preparing security-related periodicals for training purposes, and yet others simply have established an extensive in-house library for their internal protection staff to use. This latter option is good, except that it fails to reach everyone in the institution who has a role in crime prevention and detection.

**Getting Started**

The most effective way forward is to begin by selecting an “Editor” to oversee the project. Experience has shown that a good candidate to fill this position should be an operative who has some background in proactive security administration and understands that it’s always advisable to try to uncover crime related deficiencies before they occur; rather than after the damage has been done. Half the battle is won when the right candidate is chosen to fill this position. The right candidate should possess above-average reading and cursive skills, as well as the ability to find timely and relevant periodicals for re-publication. He or she should be versed in copyright and re-publication essentials, be adept at networking with governmental and non-governmental agency representatives, and inter-agency managers, and be proficient with computer and internet research capabilities. Moreover, aspirants ought to be capable of adjusting mindsets from the enforcement policing model, to the more proactive model closely associated with the community policing and private security protection paradigm.

**The Art and Science of Proactive Security Programming**

One of the central reasons for using this philosophical protection model can be traced back to the early 1970s when major police and private security agencies rarely dedicated resources to preventing crime prior to its occurrence. In the 1970s however, police agencies following the
British policing model began formulating crime prevention/ community policing programs via a Law Enforcement Assistance Administration grant awarded to the University of Louisville.

In the court of security opinion these efforts have helped by bringing crime rates down in many municipalities nationwide. Today most major police and private security entities have a crime prevention office within their respective agencies. The benefit in using trained crime prevention staff to spearhead the networking effort is that these specialists have been taught to develop a different mindset than their security brothers and are better able to apply both reactive and proactive crime control strategies simultaneously.

**Delivering the Security Message**

One of the most effective ways of getting security and safety information out to fellow security troops and institutional employees is via establishing a conduit to deliver the message. Establishing an in-house newsletter is an excellent method to accomplish this task. The proposed publication could include recent articles highlighted in industry journals and newsletters or other relevant information that is germane and relevant. The articles should be selected by the editor in consultation with the security administrator and should include industry-specific topics affecting the security and safety of the entity at hand. As an example, if the entity is a hospital then the information should be relevant to healthcare security and safety. The newsletter could be disseminated on a monthly or quarterly schedule and periodical “alerts” should be forwarded as needed.

**Topic Diversity**

Possible Newsletter topics might include:

- Security and safety related topics focusing on target hardening devices, electronic surveillance technologies, alarm system design, crime prevention and related proactive security issues, and white and blue collar crime data

- Crime analysis/mapping data from local community sources such as the chambers of commerce, local community boards, political entities, religious facilities, and state and federal law enforcement agencies
• Global research affecting security and safety issues
• Fraud prevention and detection data
• Homeland security updates and terrorism alerts
• Security through environmental approaches
• Cutting edge security advances

Establishing a Security Library

Thinking out of the box for a moment, it would be an excellent idea for all security departments to have an extensive security/safety library for its protection staffs’ use and for the use of other employees who might find the info useful. The library might include a book section by topic, and a magazine, journal section for articles, newsletters, etc. The secret is finding the funds for such a project. Stretching the security dollar in today’s financial climate is both an art and a science, but finding the funds for such a library is well worth the effort. A possible revenue source to get the funds for this project might be found in applying for a grant to stock the library. Grants can be found at the local level via contacting local development associations, chambers of commerce, politicians’ offices, and business development entities. Grants are also available at the national level via contacting www.grants.gov, www.businessgrants.org, www.sba.gov.

It’s also a good idea to ascertain if your institution has grant writing capabilities to help in this effort. If not, many municipal agencies and local development agencies may be able to help if asked. Beyond trying to obtain a grant for the funds, another option might be to reach out to local businesses, foundations and philanthropic organizations for their assistance. Other examples of possible sponsors for your program might be found by contacting businesses that have a vested interest in your firm’s services and who might help if only asked --i.e., if your firm is a hospital you might wish to contact pharmaceutical conglomerates, or medical device manufacturers, if your firm is a security guard agency you might wish to contact a security guard uniform or portable radio manufacturer, and if your firm is a financial services entity you might wish to contact banks, mortgage houses, etc. You are
only limited by your imagination!

**Outsourcing Newsletter Preparation Services**

Another method of getting a newsletter published is to outsource the job. Finding the right company is not a difficult task, there are a number of firms that specialize in preparing print media services. The cost of this service can be kept to a minimum especially if the research and article selection criteria is performed by the company requesting it. The only job being asked of the consultative firm is to put the newsletter together for distribution.

**Personalizing Your Security Newsletter**

Finding the right format for your newsletter involves some thought. First and foremost is finding the right title for the publication. Possible titles might include:

- The Spotlight
- The Security Advocate
- Security and Safety News

**Audience Targeting**

Seeing that security and safety is every employee’s job, it is a good idea to disseminate the security newsletter to other department managers so that the word gets out to all company employees. If feasible, it would be a good idea for the security administrator to include a section in the periodical titled “The State of Facility Security”. This special feature might include new enhancements in security and safety completed and/or contemplated, results of criminal activity within the institution, procedural issues requiring attention, parking security issues, safety and security related issues etc.

**SECURITY WORKSHOPS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

In addition to disseminating a periodical newsletter, formulating a series of crime prevention related specialized workshops for company employees might also be an excellent method of capturing the employees’ undivided attention. Some possible topics might include:

- Personal safety tips
- Auto security and safety tips
- Residential security tips
- Identity theft prevention tips
- Robbery prevention tips
- Burglary prevention tips
- Street safety tips
• Internal theft prevention tips

It’s important to note that many of the safety and security brochures listed above are available free of charge from local law enforcement agencies, chambers of commerce, and county, state and federal public safety agencies. Moreover, many of these agencies also offer speakers and films free of charge.

Aspects of Program Evaluation

As with all programs, a system of evaluation should be designed so that the actual effect of the program can be measured. Some areas to be considered include:

• Before, middle, and after studies should be developed to help gauge the public information effort
• Information-capturing memos should be forwarded to department heads advising them of the initiative and asking for their input re topic selection
• Statistical evaluations should be designed to gauge overall institutional participation in the program

A FINAL WORD

There are an infinite number of strategies to get the word out; formulating an in-house newsletter and library is definitely one of them. If your institution does not already have a venue to get the word out, formulating one makes good sense. All in all, the return on investment is well worth the effort. All things considered, an effective well run media initiative is limited only by the vision of the person shaping it, and by the practitioner nurturing it!