

# SECURITY FOCUS



## The Benefits of Choosing the Right Security Team

As the end user, you need to ensure that your external support is focused solely on meeting your long term needs regardless of the structure of the solution.

One of the long running topics of discussion in the security industry is the proper roles of the industry players in meeting the security program needs of an end user. Broadly speaking and disregarding the security hardware and software manufacturers, the primary players are the guard service providers, the system integrators, and the consultants. The challenge to the end user (our clients) is how to optimally engage each of these providers to obtain the most cost effective security solution. This question arose in a startling way in discussions a few weeks ago with a well respected professional colleague about a tactical move by one of the big industry entities to lay claim to essentially the totality of the project development cycle including the site physical security assessment and resolution of personnel issues.

As outlined above and disregarding security hardware and software manufacturers, the security industry can be broadly categorized into three groups. The first group is the security guard companies. As with the entities in the other two categories, these companies are contacted when an end user has concerns about

their security posture. The end user concerns are discussed with the ultimate goal of soliciting recommendations to address and mitigate their concerns. In general, security guard companies are in the business to sell security guard hours; they have no other remedy to sell and they see the human element as crucial to the success of any security program. They therefore formulate security within that framework. In other words, if an end user calls a guard service company, they generally have two choices: sell guard services or refer your business to a consultant or integrator. The latter options do nothing to meet their quarterly revenue goals. The temptation is therefore clear.



The second group is the security integrators. At their core, these companies install and maintain security related systems such as access control, closed circuit television (CCTV), intercom, duress notification, and mass notification. As the

name implies, these companies make a cohesive system out of the various security subsystems that might be represented in the project. As a classic example, the integrator would be responsible for ensuring upon an access control system alarm that the CCTV system displays the proper video signal, begins recording the tagged files, and sends the video clips of the alarm initiating event. The relationship of the integrator with hardware/software manufacturer usually involves preferential pricing based on volume; in other words, the more hardware/software the integrator sells, the lower their cost from the manufacturer, presenting at least the possibility of increased margins or marketplace competitiveness. When an integrator is asked by a potential client for potential solutions to a security concern, it also almost invariably includes a system (hardware/software) intensive solution; they are trained in systems application and have a financial incentive to sell systems. In fact they have no other remedy to sell.

The third group is the consultants whose expertise lies in their ability to recommend and develop solutions to security problems. The key to a good consultant is his/her ability to see the solution in terms of all of the available tools such as policies

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**C. H. Guernsey & Company**  
Engineers • Architects • Consultants  
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## The Benefits of Choosing the Right Security Team (cont.)


and procedures, security guards, electronic systems, physical security, employee training and awareness and personnel reliability programs. Consultants, as a class, tend to be very product neutral, recognizing that one particular product or family of products may not always be the best solution for the current project but may indeed be the solution of choice for the next engagement, depending on the specific needs of the client. Consultants do not sell or benefit from a solution other than the agreed upon consulting fees. As consultant fees are normally set at the onset of the engagement, a security solution with a modest implementation cost yields no greater benefit to the consultant than the enterprise scale worldwide implementation project.

At this point, it should come as no surprise that I am a member of the consultant group as, in my opinion, it represents the best way to provide clear advice

and counsel to my clients. As a consultant who also happens to have an engineering degree and regularly performs system design engagements for our clients, I often recommend system based solutions to our clients. However my clients know that my recommendation is based on my best judgment regarding their needs and the ability of the recommended solution to cost effectively meet those needs in the long term. Our specifications and design drawings attempt to capture the technical solutions that are best suited to the project. These documents can then be used in a competitive bidding process among integrators that have been prequalified according to their experience, qualifications, certifications, and financial stability. It is this process that we have seen time and time again deliver real long term value to our clients.

Finally, as a consultant, I do not have any business relationships with any solution providers; this gives my clients an added

degree of confidence that our recommendations are free from any bias based on financial gain from the transaction. It is in this role that I strive to become my clients' trusted advisor.

There is no question that development and implementation of a comprehensive security program often requires a mixture of every available security tool. The proper application of these tools in the development of the security program takes a very clear and unbiased evaluation of the security needs of the client and a long term view of risk reduction, program cost, and program maintainability. Just as the desired result of your products is dependent on the right combination of all of the ingredients, the same is true with your security program. As the end user, you need to ensure that your external support is focused solely on meeting your long term needs regardless of the structure of the solution. 

*Randall R. Nason, PE, CPP, CFDC*  
*randy.nason@chguernsey.com*