Finding the Win-Win with Your Security Service Provider

The right selection process helps tie in security with broader institutional goals and objectives.

By Oren Alter· April 3, 2014

For many higher education (HED) safety and security senior managers, the selection of a security service provider is bound to take place once, or several times throughout their career. With high organizational and personal implications at stake, the correct selection from the endless list of providers can become a daunting and challenging task.

The following selection criteria can assist higher education senior security managers to change the security service provider procurement process from an economical focused transaction to a win-win decision with direct ties to broader institutional goals and objectives.

1. Service standardization and ongoing supervision The selected service provider should have the ability to standardize and proactively enforce its services standards throughout the organization via post orders, operational procedures, regional supervision etc. Service standardization limits liability and creates predefined, tangible service benchmarks that are easy to evaluate measure and manage.

2. Central management via a dedicated, single point of contact Effective management of the security service provider should take place via a single point of contact at the security service provider that is responsible to implement service standards. When multiple locations are involved, monthly conference calls with service provider regional managers can assist the HED institutional manager to receive feedback from the security providers and relay any messages and guidelines to the regional managers.

3. Timely flexibility and scalability or service The selected security provider should have the ability to respond to a variety of unpredictable security needs in a timely manner and with scalable capabilities- vehicles, armed officers, etc. Retaining the same provider for a variety of circumstances allows the institution to provide manageable, standardized services regardless of the situation on hand.

4. Provider reputation To limit liability, the security service provider should have a respectable image within the greater law enforcement and emergency response community. It is also important to note that security service providers that also provide things like cleaning and building maintenance services can have an inadvertent effect on the overall image of the level of security provided at the HED institution. In addition, when selecting a highly reputable provider, the institution
can capitalize on that image within the law enforcement community by adding senior service provider managers to advisory boards and relevant institutional committees.

5. **Formal and informal mutual networks** The service provider relationships with local, state and federal law enforcement, and emergency response providers can assist the institution on multiple levels both in routine and crisis situations. On the other hand, a successful partnership will also allow the security service provider to utilize the educational institution’s network in its effort to acquire access to additional vertical markets.

6. **The ability to develop a reciprocal relationship to the benefit the student population.** Transforming the affiliation between the institution and the service provider to a mutually beneficial partnership can significantly help both sides of the relationship. This partnership can include the following parameters:
   - The security service provider should be able to hire graduating students from various relevant programs in a prioritized process, thus gaining well educated and capable employees while providing employment opportunities to recent graduates.
   - The security service provider should be able to provide gainful employment to graduating students in different of professions and at different levels of salary based on student experience and skills.
   - Special attention should be given to veteran students and their unique skill set as it applies to multi-level employment opportunities at the security service provider.
   - The institution should invite, and the security service provider should participate in institutional recruitment days.
   - Both sides should have the ability to advertise and participate in counterpart community outreach projects.

7. **Global presence** Choosing a security service provider with a global presence is highly beneficial when the educational institution has overseas operations. A single provider for all operations will ensure streamline management, consistency in standards, capitalization of mutual networks and additional opportunities for graduating students.

In the security service provider industry there are numerous security companies that provide a large array of services. Nevertheless, only a selected few companies have the capacity to sufficiently provide the aforementioned security criteria. With the ability to transform the selection of the security service provider from a cost focused process to a broad return on investment approach, the higher ed senior security manager will not only improve the level of service provided to the campus community but will also convert the security department from an expense-perceived service department to a true partner in the achievement of the institutions fundamental educational goals.

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