Facility Owners and Managers

Let's begin the process of analyzing your current security standards by addressing the following 4 issues. The answers you provide will aid your security professional in determining the appropriate system necessary for creating a safer environment for your employees, customers, vendors, and visitors.

1. Future plans - what is your short-, mid-, and long-range vision for an effective access control system? Is it scalable to support any future plans of mergers and acquisitions?
2. Your current system - what investment have you already made? Is your current system upgradeable?
3. Asset control – what assets do you currently have and what value do these assets have in relation to your operation or business? Assets include computers, patient/customer records, and client data.   Have the assets changed requiring higher levels of security, do the locks and/or key system need to be replaced?
4. Credentials – What types of credentials is your company using and how many have been distributed? What format of credential are you utilizing – an id card? How do ensure that there are no duplicate ids?

ObservationsBy simply inviting a security professional into your facility to observe the everyday culture, it will provide invaluable information needed in determining procedures and rules in granting and limiting access controls. There will always be a conflict between convenience and security, the challenge is to create procedures and rules that balance these contrasting goals.

During the observation, your security professional will –

•Observe the employees holding doors open for each other? If so, how are you able to verify current employment status?
•Was the door opened for persons carrying large packages? If so, were id's checked?
•Did visitors sign in at the reception desk? Did the visitor receive an id badge and was the visitor instructed on how to wear it? Was the visitor escorted by a staff member?

Do Site Survey and Security Audit

Walking through your facility can be invaluable in developing a comprehensive access control plan. Following are a few things to look for …

Mechanical Security –

If the openings aren't mechanically secure, any additional funds spent on electronic access control will not be as effective. Before moving forward, be on the lookout for:

_____Are the doors, frames, and hinges in good condition? Are they rugged enough for the application and durable enough for traffic, are the frames mortar-filled?
_____Is a patented, high-security key used, how many have been distributed? Have any been lost and how easy is it for the keys to be reproduced? How often do you re-core the locks?
_____Do you have reasonable accommodations for the handicapped to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
_____ Are cross-corridor fire doors in place? Do you have magnetic door holders tied to the fire system?

Identify Assets and Value –

Many consider assets to be tangible items that can be sold for quick cash. Assets include anything that someone might want to steal or destroy, and vary from customer to customer. The important thing is to put a price tag on the loss of the asset, plus the cost of loss of productivity. What is the potential liability that could result from this loss.

Identify the Threat –

Consider your surroundings: Have the surroundings changed? Have you noticed any gang activity? Have you noticed an increase in shuttered businesses? If so, perhaps an increase in perimeter security is in order. Pay attention to outside lighting, cameras, and gated access.

Evaluate the Facility –

Work closely with your security professional when selecting products for the upgraded system. How old is your building and does it have architectural or historical significance? How thick are the walls and are you aware of asbestos used as an insulating material? If so, it may be difficult and costly to install conventional, wired access control devices. Perhaps a WI-FI solution will be the right alternative.

Gather All of the Design Details

For each opening requiring access control, you will need to work with your security professional in determining the details to ensure they order the right product for the given application.

_____Does the door swing in or out?
_____Is the door left handed or right handed?
_____What's the finish of the existing hardware?
_____What's the lever style? Would you prefer a more modern look?

How does each door operate and what are the expectations? Work with your security professional for each opening that covers the following conditions. Come to a mutual understanding and agreement before signing off on the work to be performed.
_____Normal state
_____Authorized/unauthorized access
_____Authorized/unauthorized egress
_____Monitoring and signaling
_____Power failure, fire alarm, and mechanical operation

Determine the best place to access control equipment. This could be a telco or IT closet, server room, or administrator's office. You should make sure your staff will have access for installation, and service and maintenance in the future. Also, do you have enough space on the wall to mound access control panels, interface modules, and power supplies?

AND

Determine your network coverage. Do you have IP drops where you need them? Is there sufficient WI FI coverage where it is needed or should you opt for WI FI locksets?

Ensure Code Compliance

Several agencies have issued codes and standards through the years to enhance life safety, improve privacy, and reduce fraud. These need to be factored into your overall access control plan:
_____Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)
_____Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
_____Sarbanes-Oxley (aka SarbOx or SOX)

Building codes and standards – ensure compliance with the following codes and standards:
_____Model Building Code (IBC) - Amendments, occupancy
_____Life-Safety (NFPA 101) – Means of egress
_____Fire (NFPA 80) – Retro fitting, sprinkler systems

_____Accessibility (ANSI A117.1) – Operators, credentials
_____Electrical (NEC NFPA 70) – Installation, wiring, products

Validate Security Requirements

Different applications have differing security requirements. Verify these needs with your security professional before starting the system design, otherwise you can prepare for a lot of extra work and expense. These considerations need to be factored into the overall access control plan as they have a direct impact on product selection and system configuration.

_____**Lockdown:** Is lockdown capability needed on the interior or just exterior – or at all?
_____**Real-Time:** Is real-time communications to the access control system a critical requirement? For perimeter doors or interior doors? Consider a WI FI instead.
_____**Monitoring Requirements:** How much monitoring do you need? In most cases a door position switch will suffice, however, you may want to know that a door is both closed AND secured – these aren't necessarily the same thing.
_____**Audit Trail Requirements:** How important is it for you to know who and when someone entered your building or a particular room? For code compliance, this feature is almost always mandatory. For example, accessing computer rooms, personnel records and patient record rooms, or even to audit trail reports to validate employee activity.
_____**High Security and Classified Areas:** For increased security, there are several options. Is multifactor authentication a requirement, such as card plus PIN or even a biometric verification? Should there be a two person rule?

Special Considerations – Some areas, like memory treatment centers for Alzheimer's patients, require valid access credentials from both sides of the door – keeping the right people in while keeping the wrong people out. Clearly this requirement takes a different set of hardware than your typical free-egress lock or exit device.

Determine Business Requirements

Let's consider the final details that will allow you to complete your system design:

_____**Aesthetics:** Many high profile building owners use architectural design to make their facilities stand apart. This extends to the interior space as well. So please consider, is a black wall reader the right choice or will an elegant lock with integrated card reader and designer lever a better option?
_____**Infectious Disease Control:** Some locks and doors are available with an antimicrobial finish designed to inhibit the growth of bacteria.

_____**Turnover:** What kind of turnover does the facility experience? Heavy turnover would be difficult to manage with a PDA –programmable offline lock. However, single card systems actually program access privileges onto the card, virtually eliminating the need to tour the doors to reprogram them. Of course, you should address online solutions as well.

_____**Applications:** It's inevitable that a variety of applications will converge into a single system. For this reason, communicate to your security professional that when selecting an access control system, that you require an integrated system that will include support for parking access, visitor badges, integrated video, and any other needs as required.

_____**System Management:** It's important to determine who, how, and where you will manage the new access control system. In some instances when there are multiple departments, the department head will manage their own people while a system administrator will maintain and manage the main centralized system.

_____**Budget:** This is a long-term planning process that comes into play while developing the priority list through several phrases. All of the upfront research plays a major roll into determining the access control system that fully meets your requirements.

Whether large or small, considerations for developing and designing an access control system should be the same. The bottom line – purchasing a larger system in itself is not an appropriate business goal, per se. What is appropriate, however, is selecting a system that fits your needs and will offer the higher level of security you currently have in place while providing a platform for future growth and expansion. Pop-A-Lock security professionals look forward to working with you to reach your goal of keeping your employees, information, and equipment safe.

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The information provided here may not cover all security risks and concerns. This document is solely to provide some suggested matters to consider. Consult a security expert who can visually examine the security properly and make suggestions based on their findings