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When and how to hire an outside security expert”

Successful companies know that one key way to get good employees to stick around

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Successful companies know that one key way to get good employees to stick around – and customers to continue to be customers – is to give them a friendly, safe and secure environment in which to work and to experience one’s product or service.

But how does an organization know that they are doing all that they can do – or should be doing -- to provide such an environment?

While you may have employees capable of coming up to speed on the latest trends in security and safety techniques and procedures, there may be a more cost-effective way to find out the answer to this question by hiring an outside, objective security consultant to do an evaluation of your operation. He or she could give you a professional assessment of your company’s security level and recommendations on how to make sure it is effective enough to keep your customers -- and employees -- loyal.

There are several other times when one should consider calling in an outside expert to help evaluate the current security environment and recommend actions for improvement.

Occasions to call in an outside consultant

- When you or other members of your management team, from the CEO on down, become frustrated with or disagree on the adequacy of the current physical security program in place. An outside expert can provide an objective assessment.

- When your organization begins a long-term planning process and begins to look at things not as they are, but as they could be in the future. An outside security consultant can be helpful to evaluate how any strategic objectives and activities will return the best profits and not jeopardize the security and safety of the employees, customers and physical aspects of the organization.
- When new investors are being wooed or your company is being positioned for sale. An outside consultant, as an objective, impartial observer, can assure maximum procedures are in place to protect physical and human assets, thereby smoothing the way for the new investor or owner.
- When your company is planning for expansion in the short term. An outside expert can add value by bringing his or her experiences in similar markets and locations.
- When your organization institutes a process improvement or re-engineers some of its operations. Outside experts can help assure that new security measures are in place and that weaknesses are not unintended results of new processes and procedures.
- When your company has a high level of investment in quality employees and/or intellectual property. The external consultant may have better experience with processes for securing your human and intellectual capital.
- When an event has triggered a need to reevaluate one's security posture. These events can come from employee-driven events or external events, such as a distraught former employee or other individual, and can create an atmosphere of fear. An outside expert can be an important contributor to your team to evaluate and suggest corrective actions and to help mitigate any threats and vulnerabilities in the workplace.

What particular traits should one look for when hiring an outside security consultant?

First, make sure the consultant is knowledgeable and has the experience your situation calls for. There are many excellent experts to select from, with varying backgrounds, so be sure to interview several who have been recommended.

Secondly, the consultant should be “vendor-neutral” and should not accept

referral fees or commission for any recommendations they make. This is an important point so that your company knows the recommendations are based solely on its needs.

Because consultants will be on board for a short amount of time, their most important skills should be critical analysis and problem-solving abilities. Make sure their credentials demonstrate these talents.

Lastly, the consultant should be able to deliver a strategic security plan that can be implemented immediately or phased in over time as your company's budget allows.

The advantage of hiring a consultant is that they bring fresh eyes to the situation. In addition, they are on board for the short-term, so they can bring unbiased opinions and assessments to the table. To make the experience of hiring a consultant the most cost effective as possible, it is important to bring the consultant up to speed as quickly as possible. Detail your needs, problems and plans from the beginning. Create a plan and stay focused on the original "scope of the project" to keep the costs on target and within the original budget.

Expect that the consultant may make some recommendations that may not be popular. In cases like this, it's important to remember that these recommendations, according to an expert in the field of security and safety, may also be the only way to solve your long-term security problems.

About the author...



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