Case Study

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Proactive Protection: SDA Security Outfits New California City Hall With Access and Alarm Capabilities

When it comes to protecting assets and employees, the most important security element an organization should consider is a partner. Who will it partner with to provide the best technology solutions for its requirements? Who understands its needs for future growth? Who can it trust?

For the City of Corona in Southern California, one of the key issues for building that trust was finding a partner who could provide ultimate flexibility in areas such as access control, monitoring and video surveillance.

In April 2005, the city entered into a contract with SDA Security Systems, Inc. to install a Honeywell access control and intrusion alarm system at its new city hall building. The system is designed to help city officials and police prevent emergencies, as well as react quickly and effectively if one should occur.

"It gives us a better reaction time to what could happen," said Curtis Showalter, the city's public works manager.

The contract was a flagship deal for SDA, a family-owned security equipment provider and installation company with offices in San Diego and Riverside. The company – which has been in business for 75 years – is turning its focus to large, commercial integration projects in response to current industry trends.

"It's a whole new ballgame, as far as security technology goes," said Jason Beardsley, SDA regional sales manager. "Security needs are evolving, and so is technology. So security companies like us are evolving our services to meet these new demands."

SDA has used and installed Honeywell equipment for more than 20 years. Since Honeywell can tailor its security products for small and big applications alike, SDA didn't hesitate to keep the long-term partnership intact as it began its move to a bigger arena.

"Our company has been around long enough to know the reputable names in the security industry," said Shandon Harbour, SDA's director of sales and operations. "After 75 years, we know Honeywell is one of those reputable names. They've been with us for the smaller projects in the past, so we were excited to work with them on this larger scale."

The City of Corona wanted a system that could be expanded to incorporate all of the city's facilities.

The system's alarms and access card readers are tied together through Honeywell's WIN-PAK PRO access control software, which allows users to monitor events and alarms from central or remote locations. The software also lets administrators automate functions, such as creating customized alarm reports, and photo I.D. badging.

In short, city officials can monitor the entire security system from a single, internal location. After hours, dispatchers in the neighboring police station monitor the system's cameras and intrusion alarms.

"Knowing that the police department can see inside our building provides peace of mind to our employees and our patrons," Showalter said.

A top security priority for any governmental agency is to make sure only authorized personnel are moving about the premises. SDA outfitted 84 doors at the Corona City Hall with Honeywell access card readers to better control the flow of traffic through the buildings and to protect against unauthorized people roaming about.

The building is divided into 13 access-controlled areas. With other systems the city considered using, each section of the building would have had a designated number of codes or "slots" that could be assigned to users. But some employees need access to multiple areas, and therefore would have to be assigned multiple slots.

"So you might have 900 total slots on a system, but you might end up with only 300 people who can access the facility," Showalter said.

With the Honeywell system, employees can access multiple areas with a single code on their cards, and system administrators can determine which areas each card can access.

Now, 900 "slots" means 900 different users.

"One person can have access to any door or be restricted from any door in the facility," Showalter said.

The use of cards also eliminates the need for employees to physically arm and disarm an alarm system when they enter a secured area. And if a user attempts to enter an unauthorized area, the system will flag the incident as an "invalid read" on the system's customized access report.

The software also tells users if doors are locked, and gives them the capability to control the locks from a workstation or a remote location. This comes in handy for police after hours, since dispatchers can give officers access to an area simply by unlocking doors from their workstations.

"That saves them manpower and labor costs," Beardsley said. "They don't have to worry about sending someone over there to verify if a particular door is locked."

Besides access control technology, SDA provided the city hall building full intrusion protection, including glass break sensors, magnetic door contact sensors, holdup buttons and a closed-circuit video surveillance system that can be monitored internally and from the dispatch center.

The video surveillance system, in particular, has impressed the customers with its convenience. Currently, 14 cameras (analog cameras that record information into digital video recorders) are in various locations throughout the facility. Users can view live and/or recorded video from their computer workstations.

And the system can be expanded in the future to include an additional 64 cameras.

The video system's greatest benefit for city officials is the ability to keep track of people as they move through the building. But it also improves response time and effectiveness for the police in the event of an emergency.

"With the video in place, the police will be able to see what's going on, say, when a panic button is hit," Beardsley said. "They'll have prior knowledge of the situation, versus going in blindly, and that obviously works to their advantage."

If an alarm is triggered after hours, police can use the network software to find out the exact location of the alarm and then use the nearest cameras to investigate before an officer ever arrives. By using the cameras, dispatchers can see if, in fact, someone has broken into the building or if the alarm was tripped inadvertently.

"They can see everything that's happening," Showalter said. "They know whether they need to send officers or just call the building maintenance person."

Corona officials are hoping to install similar access and intrusion systems in each city facility in the next few years. In the meantime, they expect the city hall building to serve as a model of a well-rounded, effective and preventative security system.

"We owe it to our tax payers to have the best maintenance for the facility, and the security to protect our assets and our people" Showalter said.

And that sense of security is strengthened by the growing trust among the three partners.

"It's our goal to prove to the city that we can be their long-term partner of choice, just as Honeywell proved the same to us," Harbour said.

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