



Security & Surveillance: Working Together to Succeed

by Eric K. Rodriguez

Typically, security and surveillance have worked toward the same goals since their inception, even though both might have used different methods to achieve them. In the casino industry, security and surveillance still work toward the same goals, but now it depends more upon upper management and company policies whether or not the two can work together closely or, if they must keep a professional distance. Obviously, a casino that has both of these departments working closely together will see more of a return than a casino that forces them to have barely any interaction at all. Since every department and property is different, one method is not advocated over another. But rather, the advantages of a closer working relationship should be stressed, including the important factors that the two departments must agree upon for success.

Before any work or forward movement can be achieved in a working relationship, the parties must meet face to face. Directors of both departments should meet to set up a time, location and the parameters of such a meeting. One hour is not enough time to talk about a long term relationship and what you want to accomplish. Eight hours is probably too much. On average, a two to three hour meeting should be enough time to talk about major issues and come up with solutions. Having a comfortable environment, free from interruptions with snacks and drinks, is the best way to go. Directors, managers and supervisors should be present during this discussion. Since this discussion would address policies and procedures, non-management personnel should not be present. Having all these items in place will increase the chances of a smooth and profitable discussion regarding both departments' interactions.

Handheld radios and their procedures have always been among security's greatest tools. What is little known is that surveillance monitors security's channels most of the time. Imagine surveillance seeing something on camera that the security officer on the floor cannot see. Instead of a long, drawn out process of telephoning security dispatch to let them know vital information and then dispatch informing the officer on the floor, surveillance can simply use their handheld radio to inform security staff immediately. In an emergency situation this could make the difference between well-handled incidents with officer safety being paramount, to badly handled incidents with employee injuries as the result. As mentioned earlier, the times when

surveillance will be contacting security should be spelled out beforehand so that unneeded radio traffic does not clog the airways during an emergency situation.

Another important aspect of both departments working closely together is who will have permission to see surveillance video. Ultimately this is up to the director of surveillance. The parameters must be laid down, however, on who is to be allowed to see surveillance footage and when. Most directors are not on property 24 hours a day (even though we like to tell people we are) and in that case a manager, supervisor or even shift lead may be the one in charge. We are assuming that video will always be available. If review of an incident needs to happen to effectively determine whether someone is a victim, innocent of an accused crime or simply the person of interest, then video must be reviewed. There is no reason to have every director, manager, supervisor and lead present during a review. If more than one of the above mentioned staff is on property then only one should be designated as the reviewer. Working together doesn't always mean sharing every piece of information and both departments need to realize that they each have a specific job to do. Limiting, but not excluding, staff from a review helps keep the integrity of the video secure and still allows the job to be done.

As mentioned above, the sharing of information should be limited to the current needs of each department. Because one comes into possession of information doesn't necessarily mean they need to inform the other immediately, or at all. When the information is critical to the completion of a report or investigation, however, both directors should be willing to keep the other informed. Many will say that this type of close interaction will affect or destabilize a good working department. In fact, if policies and procedures are not in place, this could easily happen. A clear separation of staffs is required for the professional working relationship to be maintained. That is not to say that they cannot say 'hello' or comment in casual conversation. What we are talking about is the hanging out after work, having a beer at the local bar. This type of interaction is dangerous because not only are you imbibing drinks that can compromise your train of thought, but it doesn't look good to others that might see you and report back to your job. Keep the professionalism up front and always remember that it's not always something 'fishy'

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that may be going on, but it is the interpretation of the casual eyewitness that might cause you problems down the road.

Ultimately, the goal of security and surveillance is to protect the lives of all guests and employees, safeguard all property, and to ensure the business is covered for any future liability concerns. In a teamwork type of environment these job descriptions don't sound too hard to accomplish. Working individually to accomplish these goals may be doable but surely much more difficult. This type of working relationship must also be agreed upon for it to succeed. Having the directors of security and surveillance sit down and talk about their working relationship, even if it's not to the extent mentioned above, will provide opportunities for each to express concerns and deal with issues long before they become concerns or problems. Remember that your entire property's success hinges on everyone working together as a team. No department, including security and surveillance, is able to function completely alone and without support. Use what resources you have to be successful and remember that sometimes change is good. Business practices and technology are moving ever forward and your job and responsibility are to ensure your company's policies and procedures also move forward to create a successful and profitable business enterprise. ♣

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