

CANADIAN SECURITY

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Editor's Notebook |

Marketing the value of security



How does the rest of the company view your department?

It is a question security directors and managers should ask themselves on a regular basis as a starting point in evaluating the repu-

tation security holds in his or her company.

With so many organizations facing cost reductions or outright job cuts these days, it is prudent to conduct an audit of how your department is viewed by the rest of the organization. If, in this day and age, security is still viewed purely as a cost centre, or worse, one that is ineffective, your current existence may be in jeopardy.

If panic is the first reaction you have to talk of cutbacks in your company, you may have some work to do, according to Craig McQuate of the ASIS International council on business practices and director of global security and safety for ModusLink Corp., a supply chain management company. McQuate was presenting a session called Progressive Management for Security Professionals at ASIS International's annual conference in Orlando last month.

McQuate suggests asking others in the company what their opinion is of security, but, he adds, be prepared to fix the perception.

If few people in the organization know who you are or what you do it might be time to have a more visible presence. And as McQuate points out, it is not just enough to have a seat at the executive table. Perhaps more importantly, you need to be at the construction table when projects are underway and you can strategize with the movers and shakers as to where security can play a role and gain a foothold early in the process.

Movers and shakers also include the IT department and division vice-presidents who handle key projects within the company — projects the security department could

add value to as they move through development.

Learn to understand and even speak the jargon of other departments and you may find goldmines in which to develop new ways to make security a valued and even profitable part of the business.

These exercises do not have to cost money, either. McQuate says there are ways to bring value to the company that do not entail large investments in technology or training, such as approaching the marketing department of your organization to help get the word out about specific security initiatives, such as getting employees to wear their identification badge. By creating a poster program with the marketing department McQuate was able to improve ID badge compliance. He even went so far as to have a logo created for his corporate protection services department.

If your department provides good physical security that translates into lower insurance premiums, chances are your company is saving money. If this is the case, make sure someone at the top is aware of the connection.

Security directors could also take a cue from Dave Tyson, senior IT and physical security manager at the City of Vancouver. Tyson, who administers both sides of the security coin, has worked to create a collaborative team. During a session on security convergence, Tyson talked about how he enlisted the help of night security guards at the city to crack down on employees who were too cavalier about simple IT security policies such as computer passwords left visible on Post-It notes. Tyson's department showed the guards how to identify IT security policy violators while they did routine, often uneventful, patrols at night.

These are just a few examples of how resources are being used and adding value to the bottom line, supporting the value security brings to an organization. 🍁

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