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Beyond Optimization: Rebalancing Guard Force with Technology Can Be a Win-Win Solution

Whether they engage contract guard services or hire officers directly, organizations are feeling the impact of labor shortages and high turnover rates in their uniformed officer force. Many of our clients are struggling to find and retain security guards who are reliable, professional, engaged, and qualified. Instead, they end up with a less effective guard force that does not consistently reduce risk, leaving them more open to liability, brand damage, and negligent security program lawsuits. Yet guard services typically remain one of the costliest line items in corporate security budgets.

Despite the challenges, an officer presence is a critical part of corporate security for many companies. Organizations can make the most of their guard program by ensuring that vendors are well chosen, contracts are appropriate and specific, and services are well managed. This includes implementing inspections and KPIs to measure and validate efficacy. Outside of the program, make sure to develop employee risk awareness and ownership.

Beyond these optimization steps, augmenting with the right types of technology in the right applications can help some organizations find a better balance between cost and man hours. The idea is to retain security guards to do only the things trained people can do and use technology to augment in ways that mitigate risk more cost-effectively.

Before an organization can decide where to augment, it must examine how and where security services are currently being used, what risks are being addressed by those services, and what priority each of those risks should have.

Then ask these questions:

- What services does the guard force provide that only a trained, on-site security guard can? In situations where a physical presence is critical, where risk priority is high, or where specific guard training provides a unique value, augmentation may have limited use.
- What tasks could be removed from security's shoulders entirely? We've heard stories of guards being asked to fill in for receptionists, unload shipments, pick up trash, and even measure fish at a company fishing tournament. Do these services mitigate risk? Should they be done by others?
- What other tasks are security officers being asked to do that technology may help with? For instance, are officers sitting in a closed room monitoring video screens for long shifts? Might a video analytics solution or virtual security operations center be as effective, or even more effective? Drones, AI, mobile apps, intrusion sensors, and automated visitor management are only a few of the other options that can be used to make the guard force leaner and more effective. If so, would the cost of these solutions be justified given that the officer may be freed up for other duties or that the force may be reduced?

Don't forget that if augmentation requires guards to actively use or manage new technology, it will require a higher officer skill set and likely a higher rate. Also remember that it's crucial to assess the potential risks and consequences of each measure you're considering.

If management continually asks corporate security to reduce guard force spending, start by optimizing the uniformed officer program, and then take a careful look at it through the lens of augmentation options. Technology may help enhance risk mitigation while using budget dollars more wisely.

The Security Executive Council has helped security leaders effectively optimize and augment their uniformed officer forces. Contact us for a discussion on how we can help you.

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About the Security Executive Council

The SEC is the leading research and advisory firm focused on corporate security risk mitigation solutions. Having worked with hundreds of companies and organizations we have witnessed the proven practices that produce the most positive transformation. Our subject matter experts have deep expertise in all aspects of security risk mitigation strategy; they collaborate with security leaders to transform security programs into more capable and valued centers of excellence. Watch our [3-minute video](#) to learn more.

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