

How integrators can bring added-value to healthcare organizations

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Operating in a complex, highly regulated environment, healthcare organizations are searching for service providers, such as security integrators, who understand the challenges in the everchanging healthcare industry, can provide timely and expert advice, and will work with them to increase the productivity of their systems and workforce.

While there are many ways to serve healthcare organizations, the ability to provide security audits, understand trending technologies, and connect with IT departments are areas of interest that can help you get your foot in the door.

Security audits

One way to show value to local healthcare organizations is working with them on their security audits and compliance issues. Hospitals take industry rules and measures very seriously, spending a fair amount of time analyzing and reviewing their own policies and procedures to assure they are aligned with these regulations. You can be a 'fresh set of eyes' that brings a new perspective to your customer and that, in turn, can provide opportunities for you as a security integrator to provide the solutions to any found issues.

Security audits assess the organization's compliance with the standards that they are required to meet or have agreed to abide by. For instance, if a policy or procedure has been written around emergency lockdown, an audit determines if the organization is doing what it has said it will do such as practicing the lockdown procedures twice a year. And, if they are following the policy, are they documenting the exercise, analyzing the results and planning for improvements?

For instance, if during the lockdown exercise, it may be determined that the process took a total of 20 minutes rather than the preferred 2 minutes. The assessment would

spell out where and why the process broke down, make recommendations for improvement to either the process or systems and technology involved, and most likely call for an additional lockdown exercise to test if the improvements effectively altered the results. Who better than the integrator to determine the root causes, suggest recommendations for needed improvements and make the fixes.

Hospitals accredited by The Joint Commission are also required to perform an annual Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA). The review covers all hospital departments and takes an "all hazards" approach to ensure the hospital is prepared to respond to an incident. This includes identifying critical organizational assets, the impact of significant incidents, internal and community resources and capabilities, the organization's overall preparedness and many other aspects of emergency planning, response, and recovery. Reports, evaluation plans and number-crunching are all part of the review.

In addition, The Joint Commission and its assessment approach requires institutions to be in a state of "continuous survey readiness" and has raised the bar on performance throughout its entire three-year accreditation cycle. These self-examinations help facilities stay within accreditation standards while also allowing them to assess risk, identify additional security needs and help ensure a safe environment of care for their patients, physicians, employees, volunteers and visitors. This is an area where outside partners can lend valuable knowledge and perspective to healthcare organizations.



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Build rapport with IT professionals

As in many other industries, more and more healthcare security system decisions are being made with input from the IT department. And we're seeing increased convergence of physical and logical security team structures. By welcoming their involvement and showing ability to speak their language and answer their questions, you will gain additional layers of approval within the organization.

Another partnership that may also prove valuable is with IT systems integrators. Healthcare providers are already working with this segment of integration experts in their implementation of Electronic Health Record (EHR) and other technologies. Just as you are an expert in physical security integration and have strong relationships with your customers, building relationships with IT systems integrators could broaden both companies' customer bases and build your combined reputations as innovative service providers.

Get involved in local healthcare industry associations

How do you start to build partnerships with healthcare professionals? A good way to meet prospective customers and to learn what they will need is to join the regional chapters of the two organizations to which the leading healthcare security professionals in your locality belong. They are the American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE – www.ashe.org) and the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety (IAHSS – www.iahss.org). Both groups hold national and regional conferences and meetings throughout North America, are very active with social media and make it easy to get involved.

Participating in their knowledge give-and-take is good policy for integrators. First of all, your organization will be recognized as an integrator that puts time and effort into healthcare security. Secondly, you will be interacting with prospective clients, many of them the most influential in your state. Lastly, you will be at the forefront of learning what is high on their needed lists and how their budgets are looking for the following year. These organizations will provide you with a valuable opportunity to build enhanced, lasting and profitable relationships.

Healthcare customers bring a set of very unique challenges and requirements for every project. They are searching for integrator partners that understand their specific needs and are able to bring true value to the relationship. Broadening your scope and expertise will show healthcare organizations that you are different than many of your competitors and are worth the investment it takes to form a mutually beneficial partnership.

About Allegion

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