

Winning the security turf war

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, there were two distinct departments: security and IT. The security department installed locks and other hardware, assigned and managed keys, and took responsibility for both the safety of its facilities and the budget that ensured its security. IT operated the enterprise technology, managed its own budget and rarely thought about what was happening in the security department.

Today these once-separate departments are being pushed closer together as security technology evolves into networked solutions that require both IT's bandwidth and security's focus on optimal safety solutions. Not only are both parties at the table when it comes to implementing or upgrading security, they also each have a stake in the budget and the project's return on investment. And while the process of coming together has resulted in turf wars, in many cases these teams are finding productive ways to work together. Integrators can play an important role in bringing the two sides together.

"There is no one size fits all solution to bringing together IT and security," says Mark Casey, Integration Sales Leader in the west region for Allegion. "But what we find is that the earlier both parties are involved, the smoother the process."

In Casey's experience, early involvement often leads to more than a smooth working process—it can also lead to larger budgets. For example, security groups that are implementing networked solutions, such as cameras and access control hardware, need IT bandwidth to operate, as well as software implementation and support. Offloading the software implementation budget to IT accomplishes two objectives:

- 1 More of the security department budget is freed up to invest in security hardware
- 2 IT's software investment gives them greater control of the implementation process and ongoing maintenance





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This kind of budget management is an example of an area where integrators can play a key role in facilitating communication. Casey points out that, as devices become more compatible with each other and also more network-based, IT people often need to be educated on what the products do and what they are designed to achieve. Questions typically revolve around network and bandwidth needs, IT department requirements, location of the new technology (new vs. existing network) and whether security will operate on its own network or share an enterprise-wide infrastructure.

“Another benefit of involving IT early in security planning,” says Casey, “is that they can often provide valuable information about best practices in system architecture. When they are more informed about what devices do and how they work, the whole process is more successful.”

Sometimes size matters

When it comes to successfully communicating with IT and bringing all parties smoothly into the fold, the size of the integrator’s business can make a difference. The larger and more complex the customer’s business, the more likely they are to expect their integration partner to bring significant IT experience to the table. In fact, having certified, experienced people on staff is often part of an RFP. According to Casey, larger customers often want to know the number of technicians on staff who are certified in the proposed solution and how long the company has been selling/installing it. By requiring a minimum level of network competency that often weeds out the smaller firms not equipped to handle a larger or more complex project.

The challenge for integrators is that building the staff to support the expertise and experience requirements can be costly. For example, a software-trained technician may cost an employer \$90/hour, while a certified technician may cost \$150/hour. This translates to a significant investment that can make it harder for small integrators to compete.

Keeping up with your customer’s knowledge and skills is one of the challenges on the road to becoming an integrator that can successfully bridge the islands of security and IT. Particularly when it comes to large sales opportunities, the demands of corporate networks require that customers maintain their own skilled IT staff. Integrators must actively continue to build their reach, technology and knowledge to support them.

Integrators also may be faced with helping a customer transition from being a long-time mechanical customer to a true integration customer. This means selling higher up in the organization, and may include bringing in software partners who have connections to the IT department.

“Integrators are often the mediator, bringing the sides together,” says Casey. “When you have the language to make it clear we’re all doing the same thing, and it will go more smoothly if we get together—it makes a big difference.”

Understanding what’s at stake

As security breaches continue and compliance requirements grow, IT and security are quickly learning how to cohabitate. Security is more frequently being considered an important component of risk mitigation, rather than a capital expense with little or no return on investment. While they remain two separate—and distinct—groups, security and IT are coming closer to a level playing field in terms of their place at the leadership table.

“The security world is evolving, and we can help influence the process of choosing the right solution and brokering the conversation of how IT and security can work together to support that,” says Casey.

If you want an Allegion integrator sales rep to assist your client, contact us today [online](#) or by calling 888-758-9823.

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