



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Chuck O’Leary reveals the importance of training when it comes to access control systems

The world of security is changing rapidly and it might be difficult for those who are brand new to this industry to know where to start and how to navigate these changes. For those interested in strengthening and streamlining their security infrastructure, one of the first and most common upgrades to consider is adopting a more advanced access control system. While this seems simple enough, depending on the product chosen, this will ultimately determine how effective and

scalable the access control solution proves to be for the business. So, this begs the question: how does one navigate the options and learn how to best use a new system?

Before we can answer that question, let’s take a quick look at the current landscape. The disruption we all experienced in 2020 has changed how we approach physical security in 2021 and beyond. Building a resilient facility and security strategy that withstands adversity has never been more critical. And even in the

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wake of the pandemic, technology continues to move forward and evolve, and that fact continues to impact the access control market.

This fact is surprising because, typically, the physical access control market has been a slow-moving industry (especially when comparing it with video surveillance). However, there has been a considerable shift due to the need for better access control experiences. Stakeholders continue to be focused on integration, new features, cybersecurity, user convenience and manageability and adopting a more digital access control experience overall. There is a drive toward adopting more advanced options as companies look to upgrade their access systems. Simply put, many users want to ensure their technology investments are as modern and easy-to-use as their iPhones, and for many of them the time is now. Here we look at why knowledge is power when it comes to evaluating and purchasing a new solution.

The access control market has evolved significantly over the past year. Open platforms have driven integration, empty buildings have propelled the demand for mobile access and the cloud brings the possibility of more modern infrastructures. According to the Security Industry Association’s most notable 2021 Security Megatrends, access control innovations drive market change with touchless and frictionless solutions and a move to service models. With all of these changes, training becomes more critical overall, and now more than ever educational options have to adapt.

For many security technology providers finding new ways to keep partners and customers educated about new products, solutions, services and innovations has been a significant challenge over the past year in the wake of COVID-19. Options have had to move online, but the goal has been the same: to ensure all parties get the most out of their technology investments.

There is a demand for a heightened exchange of information and knowledge as users look to invest in security products and systems to achieve and maintain a safe and secure environment. But once a system has been deployed, its effectiveness reaches far beyond the initial instalment. To fully maximise the potential that technology or service holds, a degree of continuing education is not only helpful but necessary. By approaching training and development from a holistic perspective, allows a strengthening of processes and improving relationships between integrators, manufacturers and customers. Today, various options help integrators and security leaders achieve their desired education and industry knowledge bases. Here are the most common:

MANUFACTURER’S TRAINING

Truly successful implementation of services involves not just finding solutions, but effectively managing them. A product will never be beneficial if its value is not fully realised. For this reason, the system manufacturers find it fundamental to offer as much training and support as possible to provide a seamless product transition. Extra one-on-one training, additional continuing education and webinars are a few added support techniques that enhance the integrator and customer experience.

INTEGRATOR SUPPORT

To achieve the highest quality of service, support must be available at all levels. A collaborative approach to service has a successful trickle-down effect from

the manufacturer to the integrator and in turn the customer. By providing inclusive technical and sales support at every step of the process, there is a constructive exchange of information.

CUSTOMER FULFILMENT

Any company’s ultimate goal is customer satisfaction. When clients invest their trust and money into a product they want to see a tangible return on investment. By offering comprehensive technology education from installation and service, stakeholders can achieve a higher success rate. Maintenance contracts and onsite training increase the comfort of use for customers and ensure continuous customer loyalty.

THE DISRUPTION OF 2020 HAS CHANGED HOW WE APPROACH PHYSICAL SECURITY

NOT ALL TRAINING IS EQUAL

A company can offer the best access control product on the market. However, if it is not providing its customers with best-in-class training services, the customer’s experience and whether or not they choose to keep using that system can be dramatically affected. Before an organisation commits to an access control product or integrator, it’s vital to ensure that the provider will be knowledgeable and dependable when customers have questions or concerns regarding their access control system.

With the more recent transition to virtual, many people ultimately miss the accountability that in-person training brings. But new advancements in online training have helped bridge the gap. Offering virtual courses is an incredible way to adapt to the new landscape and has dramatically saved time and expenses from in-person events.

With that being said, there are two main offerings available to integrators and end-users today. Complimentary training options provide an informative overview of the product. These free training courses are great resources for baseline training on a system or service.

Paid training courses or certifications provide a more robust option and are specifically designed to elevate expertise in a particular access control system. Taught by an instructor who is an expert in the source material and engages with students, these classes are interactive and provide accountability – even in a virtual setting. The course instructor can even control the student’s screen to assist in training exercises, so there are real one-on-one learning options.

These creative and informative training programmes are critical for customers to find their way to successfully learning the ins and outs of a new system, and in order to support the flood of new customers searching out touchless security solutions customer support needs to be at the forefront of the integrator’s organisation if the partnership is to be successful. Several industry leaders are setting this example now by offering various courses to meet anyone’s needs.

For example, Open Options’ commitment to providing its customers with a strong and trusted

relationship is evidenced by the company's various offerings, such as its flagship product, Connect Care. By maintaining reliable relationships with its customers, many of whom are new to the world of access control, the customers are able to gain the necessary information, support and guidance for their new access control system. Customers should look for suppliers that offer services across these four pillars: technical support, platform support, professional services, and training. When manufacturers provide these options for their customers, it empowers them with the knowledge and expertise to successfully use their access control system and gives the added assurance that technical support and training is just a phone call away.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNER

Ultimately, an organisation should choose an access control provider that offers innovative, secure, scalable and demonstrated value in your specific environment. At the same time, look for one that reflects its dedication to building meaningful, long-lasting relationships with its partners and customers. This description may sound commonplace, but these deciding factors will enable you to understand better which vendor will best meet your needs today and in the future.

By selecting a provider that emphasises service over sales, an organisation will not only receive a product

that works well for its business, but a partner that goes above and beyond to connect with it as well as offer personalised training and support. A genuinely successful partnership means that the end-user will receive guidance and necessary support along the way. Ensure you choose a provider who will kindle a long-lasting collaboration and not just sell a product.

Admit it: deploying a new technology solution is an exciting time, but this process can also become complicated. There's almost always a learning curve involved with adapting to unfamiliar techniques and equipment. The most critical piece of a seamless transition to any new deployment is cohesive and straightforward training. All users must be on the same page when learning about the product to avoid any confusion or mishaps down the road. Users can achieve this through a uniform training structure that educates, answers questions and provides flexibility.

In conclusion, maintaining strong and trusted relationships with customers is vital. Having customisable security solutions is advantageous in many ways, but it can be a daunting process. Change is not always easy, and in today's market education is critical. By providing a comprehensive calendar of ongoing training opportunities offering tips, technical training and software administrator training, they can maximise resources and strengthen the partnership between manufacturers, integrators and customers ●

Chuck O'Leary is an innovative business executive with 25+ years' experience in critical infrastructure information systems, security, life safety, compliance and business operations. He is a high-energy, results-oriented leader who excels in risk mitigation analysis and identifying innovative solutions and is passionate about making a positive business impact for customers through value focused solutions. Serving as the President of Open Options, Chuck has a demonstrated track record of implementing successful business strategies that exceed company and customer expectations.

As access control systems evolve, training becomes more critical

