



KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

Jacey Bloomberg reveals the secrets behind what makes a great front-of-house security officer

In my experience, the most important security decisions on many sites are made in the front of house area. Who is allowed further into the building. Where they can go. Whether their reason for being there is genuine. What happens when something feels 'off'. These judgements are made in real time, often under pressure, in a highly visible environment where queues can form, expectations are high and mistakes are difficult to recover from.

Get it right and front-of-house becomes a powerful control point, reinforcing safety, perception, and building trust in the organisation. At the same time, it is often the first human interaction someone has with a brand, shaping first impressions, setting the tone for the visit and creating an experience that feels

both safe and genuinely welcoming. Get it wrong and even the most sophisticated downstream security measures can be undermined by a single lapse in judgement. For security leaders, the challenge is how to build and sustain excellence in a role that sits at the intersection of security, public interaction and organisational perception.

Over the years, I've seen front-of-house security evolve from a largely static presence into a far more complex and critical role. Modern sites are busier, more dynamic and more accessible. Mixed-use buildings, flexible work patterns and higher visitor volumes have increased both opportunity and risk. At the same time, expectations around customer experience have risen sharply. Visitors, employees and tenants expect seamless access, minimal friction and a positive first impression – even as organisations seek to strengthen protective security.

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The result is a convergence of responsibilities. Today's front-of-house officer must welcome, verify, challenge, assist and respond – often within the same interaction. They are not only gatekeepers, but ambassadors – responsible for delivering a seamless, positive experience while upholding robust security standards.

What I've found is that the real difference between a good officer and a great one is consistency. Most security failures at front-of-house do not happen because no process exists. They happen because a basic control is applied inconsistently.

A visitor is waved through because they seem familiar. A door is held open out of convenience. A contractor is allowed access without proper verification because the area is busy and no one wants to cause delay. These moments can look minor, but in practice they are where standards either hold or begin to erode. Great officers understand that control is built through disciplined repetition. They apply procedures reliably, even when it is inconvenient, even when others are pushing for speed and even when the pressure to make exceptions is high. Importantly, they do this in a way that feels natural and professional to the visitor, maintaining flow and creating confidence rather than friction. In my view, that discipline is one of the clearest markers of excellence.

Front-of-house security is as much a communications role as it is a protective one. And one thing I've seen time and again is that communication is often the deciding factor in whether a situation is resolved calmly or escalates. Officers are regularly required to challenge individuals, refuse access, manage conflict and respond to distress, often in public view and under scrutiny.

The most effective officers set clear boundaries without antagonising. They use simple, direct language and maintain a calm, controlled presence, adapting their approach depending on the individual and the situation. They also understand the importance of warmth: a friendly tone, eye contact and small moments of human connection that can put people at ease and, in some cases, genuinely make someone's day.

Crucially, they recognise vulnerability; not every challenging interaction stems from malicious intent. Individuals may be confused, unwell or under stress and responding appropriately requires both empathy and authority. This balance is critical. Overly rigid enforcement can lead to confrontation and reputational damage, while excessive leniency creates exploitable gaps. The skill lies in applying control with clarity and confidence, so that security measures feel like part of a positive, well-managed experience rather than an obstacle.

If procedural discipline forms the foundation of the role, behavioural awareness is what gives it its edge. Front-of-house officers occupy a unique vantage point. They see the normal rhythms of a client location: who comes in, when people move through the building, how visitors typically behave and what looks routine at a given time of day. Because of that, they are often the first to notice when something does not fit.

The best officers, in my eyes, use that position to identify subtle indicators of risk before they develop into larger issues. They notice inconsistencies: a visitor unable to clearly explain their purpose; unusual

interest in restricted areas; repeated attempts to gain access without appropriate credentials. They recognise behaviours that deviate from what is normal for that site and time of day.

What matters is that great officers do not rely on instinct alone. They engage, verify, observe and escalate where appropriate. They turn awareness into action. This is not about suspicion – it is about attentiveness. Many incidents – and this number is forecast to grow according to Securitas' latest Risk Intelligence Report – are preceded by reconnaissance or social engineering, and these behaviours are often most visible at the front-of-house area.

GREAT FRONT-OF-HOUSE SECURITY IS NOT DEFINED BY PRESENCE ALONE, BUT BY BEHAVIOUR

When an incident occurs, front-of-house is often both the first point of awareness and the first point of action. Whether the issue is a medical emergency, an aggressive individual, suspicious behaviour or a breach of procedure, the first few minutes matter and that initial response can significantly influence the outcome.

What I most admire in great front-of-house officers is their ability to think in a structured way under pressure. They confirm what is happening, prioritise safety and manage access to prevent escalation. They provide clear, accurate updates to colleagues and management, supporting a coordinated response. They understand site procedures, but also the intent behind them, allowing them to adapt when situations do not unfold as expected.

This is especially important at the front of a building, where activity is visible and anxiety can spread quickly if there is uncertainty. A calm and structured initial response does more than contain risk. It reassures those present, preserves a sense of order and maintains trust in both the environment and the people managing it. This reinforces a key point: front-of-house is not just a preventative function, but an active response capability.

Great front-of-house officers do not operate in isolation from the environment around them. They are part of how an organisation is experienced, particularly by people arriving on site for the first time. That means effectiveness is not only about enforcing procedure, but about doing so in a way that fits the setting.

A high-end corporate headquarters, a hospitality-led environment and a public-facing site may all require the same security fundamentals, but the tone of delivery will differ. I've found that the most effective officers are those who can reflect the organisation's character without compromising standards. They understand the pace, expectations and atmosphere of the site and they adapt their style accordingly. That strengthens both experience and compliance.

When front-of-house feels disconnected from the environment it serves, security can appear either

performative or obstructive. When it is properly aligned, it becomes more natural, more credible and more effective.

Front-of-house roles are increasingly combining security with reception, coordination and wider site support. In practice, this can include managing visitor flows, overseeing deliveries, coordinating contractor access, responding to workspace queries and acting as a central point of contact for day-to-day activity. This shift is being driven by a combination of factors: organisations are balancing rising expectations around customer experience with the need for robust security, while also operating under cost and efficiency pressures that favour more streamlined, multi-functional teams.

SHOULD A SECURITY INCIDENT OCCUR, FRONT-OF-HOUSE IS THE FIRST POINT OF ACTION

However, what defines a great front-of-house security officer is not simply the ability to take on a broader range of tasks. It is the ability to do so without losing focus on security. It's about maintaining control while managing competing demands. They know when to move fluidly between service and enforcement, and when security must take precedence. As the role expands, that clarity in judgement becomes critical.

Capability at the front-of-house cannot be static. Threats evolve, buildings change and operational demands shift – and with that, the expectations placed on front-line officers continue to increase. Sustaining performance in this environment requires more than initial training. It demands continuous development, grounded in real-world conditions.

Scenario-based learning, regular refreshers and on-shift coaching all play a critical role in ensuring that procedures are not just understood but applied consistently in practice.

Underlying all of this is the balance between hard and soft skills. Technical competence in systems, procedures and compliance provides the foundation, but it must be matched by strong communication, sound judgement, empathy and situational awareness. It is this combination, rather than any single capability, that defines consistently high-performing front-of-house teams.

However, capability is shaped long before training begins. Recruitment decisions play a defining role in setting the standard. Based on what I've seen, the attributes that matter most – composure, curiosity, communication and discipline – are not always obvious on a CV, but they are often what determine whether someone can perform well in a front-of-house role. Retention is equally important. Officers who understand the nuances of a site – its rhythms, risks and behaviours – are far more effective than a constantly rotating workforce. Investment in development, recognition and working conditions is therefore not simply a people initiative, but a critical component of maintaining security standards over time.

Great front-of-house security is not defined by presence alone, but by behaviour – the ability to apply control consistently, communicate with clarity and make sound decisions under pressure. It is equally defined by the ability to create a welcoming, professional and memorable experience, where security feels seamless and people feel genuinely looked after. In today's environment, it is no longer a passive role. It is a critical point of control: one that shapes both security outcomes and organisational perception in equal measure. Yet at its best, front-of-house security doesn't feel like 'control' at all ●

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