

## ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS MAGAZINE

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### BUILDING INTERDEPARTMENTAL ALLIANCES BASED ON ROSI

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Technology advances, new applications and manufacturing efficiencies have opened the doors for a true collaboration or “convergence” of departments and technologies. However, there are interdepartmental bridges that must be constructed to ensure the smooth interaction of people, ideas and solutions. Convergence has become a major topic among security and information technology professionals; but that doesn't mean that the two groups see eye to eye, or that they want to. The common ground may be the new concept of Return On Security Investment (ROSI).

Until recently, there has not been much in the way of educational studies to prepare for a career in the security field; therefore, most security personnel come with some kind of law enforcement background. IT departments, on the other hand, are usually staffed by those with degrees in computer science or with structured technical backgrounds — and never the twain shall meet.

This is an exaggeration of course; there are certainly visionary security directors who have led the charge into convergence. It is true, however, that these groups are made up of different people with different backgrounds, who sometimes even seem to be speaking different languages. To be sure, it takes a certain amount of finesse to bring the essential departments together to create a smooth working relationship, or an alliance. This process brings together departments that have an interest in advancing a mutually beneficial agenda.

The objective of planning, designing, implementing and effectively using a network-centric physical security solution requires implementing many skill sets. The complexity of technology, policy, data storage and protection, analysis, investigations and correlation of facts requires a team of dedicated departments working closely together for one purpose — to create a competitive business advantage in a global market.

Why is it difficult to build interdepartmental bridges and form alliances that will work toward a common goal? Working relationships are built on good communications, understanding, trust and sharing of multiple perspectives. Unfortunately, the fast pace of business, the competitive nature of ambitious department heads and a narrow focus on specific business goals can hinder the opportunity to build lasting alliances that produce measurable results.

#### Define the task

Building an effective alliance requires a different approach than does developing solutions with customers. In the past, suppliers focused on product-particular selling strategies that were specification- and cost-based to compete for customer orders. Typically this would be a relationship-based selling strategy focused on a narrow group of internal customers, i.e., the security department. As technology has evolved to a network-centric approach and implementation, many more departments now have a stake in the outcome and the buying process has become much more complex.

There is a dynamic and diversified supply chain leading to a solution that includes equipment manufacturers, system integrators, outside consultants, security departments, IT departments, financial departments, operation departments and their managers. Creating a focused dialogue allows common ground to be established among all of these parties, whether the role is an integrator selling to an end-user, or the end-user manager selling an idea to company executives. In either case, the focused dialogue must be strategic and big-picture-orientated.

Alliances begin with defining the common goal (business, security, risk mitigation, improved customer service) that the senior management team wishes to accomplish within a specific time frame. Focusing diverse stakeholders to accomplish the goals together is the practical foundation for building an alliance that will actually work.

Building alliances requires being aware and perceptive to the subtle signs of passive resistance that can stem from real or perceived injustices. The reality is that all companies have finite resources (money) that must be invested carefully to deliver business results and shareholder value. The bottom line is that senior management expects measurable results from any investment of resources.

The company is a political environment in that departments compete for resources. Those projects that — in the estimation of management — deliver results get funded; those that come in second must wait. Naturally, this can create friction among departments, and among people.

### Here are some ways to support convergence:

- Leverage existing network assets to deliver more value to the entire organization.
- Support business revenue drivers through more efficiency and faster decisions.
- Support departmental decision-making with real-time data delivered in meaningful ways that can be acted upon in real-time.
- Reduce redundancy of effort and individual departmental costs by consolidating processes enabled by the right technology.
- Allow departments to focus on their core strengths and contributions to the business.
- Make sure each department is able to communicate with partners about the department's achievements, resource needs and its own ideas for new ways to deliver improved results.

### Communicate to succeed

Good communication skills include understanding what the true business drivers are by asking relevant questions to stimulate a productive dialogue. It is important to listen actively without bias. Start with these questions:

- How does each department contribute to the success of the company specifically?
- What would increase that contribution or make it more efficient or less costly?
- How does this relate to the senior management's current priorities?
- What are the points of pride and culture to understand when considering their role in the alliance?

By working through the relative merits of the convergence of the security department, the IT department and other departments within a company, the individual departments remain committed to the objective. Recognition of each department's strengths and weaknesses allows the team to define the roles they will play in seeking a convergence solution. Once roles have been defined and agreed to, the real work begins. A key decision must be made early as to who will provide the leadership role, which may or may not include facilitation of the process.

While the benefit of building alliances is obvious, the process of creating successful and effective coalitions is hard work. The task requires continuous effort. Even when the company enjoys successful alliances, company leaders must nurture these relationships. The biggest challenge is gaining

understanding and ongoing support from the senior management team to deliver the solution. "Lip service," or lack of continued involvement by senior management, is the biggest impediment to delivering ROSI.

A single senior manager must be assigned the task of supporting the project from start to finish, as well as be allowed to set realistic expectations that are achievable in a realistic time frame. The morale and drive of the team depends on this support and guidance.

## Identify and promote mutual benefits

Leadership may be defined as "motivating people to do what needs to be done because they want to do it." While easier said than done, identifying benefits that relate to how people work every day is the key to this successful strategy. The process of forming important alliances does not require company leaders to plead for support. Rather, it requires them to persuade potential partners of the mutual benefits derived from an alliance, benefits that partners would lose should the alliance fail.

Will the benefit make their job more rewarding, easier to perform, save time to enable focus on critical issues, allow more effective reallocation of resources and even provide career advancement opportunities? These are all valid results that can help motivate people to support change initiatives.

When using an alliance to accomplish a specific purpose, it is important that leaders not move ahead until they are certain that everyone is behind them and that everyone clearly understands how the company wins, the department wins and how they win.

## How does this translate into ROSI?

Simply stated, security has historically been viewed as an expense versus an investment. Requesting funding for security projects has usually not been based on delivering business results in any concrete way. This process begins to change when the security department and/or the system integrator partner takes the time to truly understand each business unit's operations, challenges and opportunities.

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