

Security & Safety

Sourcing Report

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Access control

New access control system soothes post-9/11 jitters

The events of Sept. 11 have prompted a U.S. retail chain to tighten security through a new badging system.

While many corporations say it is business as usual following the 9/11 incidents of 2001, some have tightened security in spite of a lack of apparent risk to their business. One such company is **Office Depot**, the retail chain that earns \$11 billion selling office supplies and furniture across the United States. Based in Delray Beach, Florida, the chain found its headquarters to be in proximity to several of the known terrorists' base of operations. So it decided to upgrade its access control systems.

"We wanted to track people coming into our facility. We needed something more than a self-expiring visitor badge to do so," said Ken Osinski, headquarters loss prevention manager. Office Depot wanted to be able to track the repeat visits of individuals and store the information in a database for easy retrieval. It chose the Fast-Pass from **Security Identification Systems Corp.** (SISCO) to complement its employee permanent badge system, the C-Cure 800 from Casi-Rusco.

The Fast-Pass visitor system is capable of building a database for up to one million visitors, providing accountability, tracking and realtime reporting features. Approximately 2,500 employees have Casi-Rusco's swipe or prox "hard badges." The two systems control access



The Fast-Pass badging system supports a database of up to one million visitors.

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to the company's three buildings at the corporate campus, as well as a newly built call center nearby.

Photo ID system weds speed to convenience

Visitors are never permitted to roam buildings, but they still must be given photo ID badges on their way in. The campus receives about 200 to 300 visitors a day, the majority being repeat visitors who have already received badges. But the company is still creating 40 to 50 new badges a day. A photo ID badge can be generated in under a minute for a first-time visitor, Osinski estimated. Once created, the visitor's history stays in the system.

"We have a server dedicated to Fast-Pass," Osinski said. Being a computer retailer, the company could afford to supply its own dedicated server.

Some of the visitor badges are created for employees who forget to bring their permanent badge. Osinski generates reports as needed by date and time, or by individual. "There have been times in investigations of a theft with a physical description of someone, that we would peruse photos or see who was in the building at the time." It has helped in solving some internal thefts.

A receptionist enters badge information and the badge is produced instantaneously, Osinski said. A camera connected into each SISCO PC captures and prints information in seconds. Kiosks that enable visitors to enter badge information are available from SISCO, but Office Depot does not use these. "We will possibly implement it at our call centers, which have a lot of visitors."

In the nine months since Osinski came on board at Office Depot, SISCO has implemented three Fast-Pass software upgrades. During the most recent upgrade, the maker programmed the keyboard with macro shortcuts on the F keys to replace cumbersome keystrokes and mouse use. History functions were expanded.

Asset tracking improved



SISCO's Fast-Pass visitor badge system at Office Depot headquarters in Delray Beach, Florida.

features, according to marketing manager Becky Rosado. The biggest advantage is baggage asset tracking, which customers have been asking for. Since the new heightened security concerns, "people are overly concerned about packages entering and exiting buildings.

The software upgrade will be able to monitor the number of packages a visitor enters and leaves with through prox readers. The software now authenticates government-issued photo IDs on certain aspects, such as the paper and inks used, the presence of a hologram, and evidence of tampering.

Another new feature is more card design options, permitting the inclusion of fingerprint and facial recognition templates and metal-detection applications, as well as photocopies of IDs and mag stripes. "Court buildings, especially, are places that are feeling threatened these days and are looking for an all-encompassing system," Rosado said.

A new vehicle-tracking function (especially for seaports) will permit permanent tracking devices to be placed on vehicles so they don't have to stop at the entry gate. And new report customization features let the security manager decide parameters for authorizing visitors. "We found out that everyone in the industry is different," Rosado said. Some require a passport or driver's license; others accept just a business card. Certain visitors may now be preauthorized to enter. The new software maintains all versions of an ID presented by a repeat visitor over time, instead of deleting old information from the database as previous versions did--to enable the manager to check if the IDs represent the same person.

The new software also enables visitors to use unmanned kiosks to create their badges. Previously, a guard was required for identity verification. "From the access control system, the guard can look at the [CCTV] camera and see if that person is the same as the one pictured on the badge, streamlining the work," Rosado said.

System options

Rosado said system costs vary widely, based on

create color-coded passes for each company, thereby controlling the floors a visitor may be allowed to go to.

While Office Depot does not use the Fast-Pass system to control property loss, it has the option to implement the software to do so. "We have the ability for asset management tracking using C-Cure 800 at the call center," Osinski said. The company does incorporate CCTV into its internal security system, with Intellex cameras and a network-based digital recording system. Osinski can monitor and control pan/tilt/zoom functions of all cameras from his desktop for the entire campus.