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The Brilliance of Outsourced Security for Hybrid Workplaces

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Securing workplaces across multiple office locations of a nationwide enterprise was already a challenging task pre-pandemic. The inherent variability and distance separation between office locations in a corporate real estate portfolio represent implicit security challenges for any corporate facility leader to manage. Today's highly dynamic hybrid work environment has only increased complexity of operation, resulting in greater potential security exposure and reduced efficiency.

Outsourcing this security risk to dedicated experts is worth considering. This article provides background on the challenges of securing an office portfolio in a hybrid work environment and how outsourced, managed physical security can be a game-changing solution for facility professionals.

Hybrid Work Increases Variability

The fluctuating daily occupancy of hybrid work presents a new paradigm for achieving corporate objectives. Businesses are trying to maximize usage of their office space while, paradoxically, also striving to ensure employee satisfaction by granting more days to work from home. Combine these occupancy fluctuations with the need to enforce flexible work policies for different staff groups, in separate locations, on changing days of the week – all while keeping everyone safe – and you have a new game of 3-dimensional chess that facility leaders are playing.

Meanwhile, security technology has become more complex. Maintaining the performance of access control or video surveillance systems to secure remote locations, whether through on-site staff or a combination of regional integrator dealers, presents logistical challenges. Maintaining data backup, performing software updates, adhering to security protocols, and managing communications can overwhelm even experienced facility or security leaders.

It is hard to devote the time and expertise needed to ensure efficient and solid security portfolio-wide while also effectively addressing the rest of your facility management duties.

The Outsourced IT Service Model

Multi-location firms have long realized the benefits of using cloud computing (SaaS) to effectively distribute uniform technology at scale across locations. In fact, outsourcing the entire IT or cyber-security service to experts, using a Managed Service model, is a widely adopted practice which delivers ongoing cost savings by eliminating the in-house overhead of staffing an IT department. For firms where IT is a supporting service, not a core function, it is a cost-effective solution which allows them to focus on their primary business.

So why would outsourcing physical security be any different than IT, Software as a Service (SaaS) or Cyber Security as a Service (CSaaS)? Why invest time and money for internal expertise in a security technology that is not driving core business value?

How Cloud Computing is Changing Physical Security

Physical Security has lagged other technologies in cloud adoption partially because the industry is highly disaggregated and regionalized, run by local dealers and integrator businesses which grew out of the long-ago need for local locksmiths and security guards to respond quickly to any alarm signal.

Additionally, commercial real estate, the biggest customer for the security industry, has historically been slower to adopt modern technology than other sectors, focusing investment on securing prime locations or nicer amenities, rather than technology, to gain a competitive edge.

Everything began to change as sustainability of building operations became a priority and smart building technology became an industry-wide consideration. Then, when average consumers started to adopt cloud-based solutions for smart-home systems, everyday folks could use systems such as ADT, Nest, and Ring to secure their home using cloud-based applications. Suddenly businesses wanted the same advanced technology at work that they had at home.

Now cloud-based video surveillance and access control systems are employed by businesses large and small to get automated video records and security alerts sent their way when an event occurs after hours or at far-flung locations.

But this added convenience is not truly outsourcing. Adopting a cloud-based security solution is merely using technology to manage security better on your own. While you pay a system provider for data storage and software updates, you, the business, must still maintain the system, respond to alarms, find repair solutions, ensure procedures are followed, and that data is captured.

The Case for Managed Physical Security

Managed Security takes advantage of these cloud-based platforms to administer security nationwide, facilitate real-time oversight, and deliver ongoing security updates to enhance overall security while minimizing operational complexities.

But truly outsourced Managed Physical Security employs a security technology provider as a fully accountable agent to take over a customer's entire security operation, including the cloud-based platforms, but also the myriad of other security requirements that demand time and attention.

The central benefit of Managed Security, like outsourced IT, is that it delivers ongoing cost savings by eliminating the in-house overhead of staffing for security or wasting staff time managing of the security operations as a secondary function (like using your IT staff to distribute physical security privileges). For firms where security is merely supporting the primary business function, Managed Security is a cost-effective solution allowing them to focus on what is most critical to the business.

In a fully managed security model, the provider not only runs the cloud-based platform, but also custom designs and installs the system for every location, as well as monitors and maintains the system operation. If a security event happens (like an access door left open) the provider will alert the proper client personnel. If a component breaks down, the provider is responsible for fixing it and ensuring peak performance. This not only extends the life of the system, ensures accountability, and keeps the system running, but also eliminates unexpected capital expenses and downtime.

This accountability portfolio-wide creates massive efficiency for corporate real estate leaders who gain access to a single vendor on call to address the needs of any individual location, and who already knows the system and the procedures for every location. This eliminates the inefficiency of managing an ad-hoc mix of local integrators, with no shared knowledge or protocols.

Also, because the managed service provider executes design and installation themselves, they control all the necessary integrations at each location. This gives them the ability to tailor the integration for each disparate legacy business system in place (like HR, Identity Management, and Facility Management) at each location, minimizing the operational disruption. This makes portfolio-wide adoption easier, faster, and less expensive due to the consistency of the installation vendor. It also makes the ongoing operation across those integrations more uniform for the client.

Another benefit of Managed Security, especially in the era of hybrid attendance, is the data richness gained from having a single, consistent managed data platform. Not only is access data readily available for analysis, but you also gain outsourced expertise from the provider in helping customize a client's activity reporting for auditing or assessing space use. It is significantly more efficient than trying to piece together ad-hoc data reporting from a mix of locations.

Additionally, a managed service can integrate your access identity profiles directly to authoritative source active directory (like the master HR of IT directory), synchronizing identity management between access data and employee profiles. This enables attendance monitoring to be more accurate for understanding the sources occupancy and space use by user, by location, by day and more. This is critical knowledge for understanding hybrid usage patterns in each office location

Summary

Managed Security is a remarkably efficient and cost-effective approach for securing multiple office locations and is especially relevant in a highly variable hybrid working environment. Outsourcing to experts frees corporate real estate leaders from the non-strategic workload that security management presents for most organizations. It also delivers more uniform, high quality security performance across all locations to minimize security risks and foster a safe and productive work environment.

Learn more about Kastle's Managed Security Service here.