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Industry insights

Bringing mechanical and electronic security together in your service offering

In most buildings, security is a hybrid solution of both mechanical and electronic security products. Traditionally, locksmiths take care of the mechanical door hardware and the integrators focus on the electronic security technology.

That was Kevin Ronan's experience. He worked most of his career with a commercial door hardware company. Kevin's company designed, installed and serviced all the mechanical door hardware. However, when it came to the electronic security—such as the access control products—they would have to pass it off to an electronic security integrator.

"We'd do everything up to the card reader," he says, "and then have an integrator do the rest."

But Ronan began to notice that customers weren't happy with the hand-off.

"When you have multiple companies working on the same door opening—one addressing the mechanical hardware and another handling the electronics hardware, such as access control—the lines become blurry," he explains. "At the end of the installation, the customer is asking who owns the warranty, who owns follow-up service and who is going to fix my issues. They want one person to call—one person to own everything done at the door opening."

As those situations became more frequent, Ronan considered how he could seamlessly blend together door hardware and electronic security systems. He wondered if it was possible to have one integration team that could provide every need for an opening: mechanically and electronically.

Build combined team

Alan Weeks, President/Founder of SAF Technologies, saw the potential in Ronan's vision and hired him as the manager of its newly formed Commercial Door and Hardware Division. His first task was to build a combined team.



As customers requested both types of services, SAF shared how they had combined door hardware and integration for a more cohesive installation process. And customers were responsive.

"Customers like not having to sub work out or pass off to another vendor," he says. "With staff skilled on both sides—and even some who possessed both skill sets—we are able to address all of a customer's door opening needs."

The advantage to the customer is obvious: one service, one invoice, one contact.



Extend your service offering

Integrators can equally benefit from such an approach. For starters, by offering door hardware solutions in addition to your electrified and electronic ones, you're able to extend your service offering—and your revenue potential. Additionally, it positions you for longer-term customer relationships as you become more of a consultant to customers.

While the combined services could be of value in project bids, Robert Gaulden, Allegion's Director of Aftermarket and Electronic Sales, believes the real value is found on the services side of the business.

"Certainly, on projects, having that understanding and knowledge base of mechanical and electronics allows integrators to do more detailed site surveys and potentially gain more doors," he says. "But I think the real opportunity for expanding revenue happens more organically as part of service contracts."

Gaulden says when integrators are frequently at a site, they may notice something and are able to fix it as part of their service offering. It establishes integrators as a one-stop-shop with an added level of convenience.

It also makes more sense in the eyes of customers.

Integrators want to maintain the health and integrity of an electronic access control (EAC) system. If the EAC isn't working properly because a door won't latch—that's a security issue, regardless of where the issue lies.

"You can have the most sophisticated access control system on the planet, but if the door doesn't latch, your opening is not secure," says Gaulden. "As an industry, we've long operated these two functions separately, but today, to drive a better customer experience, we really need to be thinking of them together."

Cross-train and build depth of knowledge

To be successful in integrating both hardware and electronic security specialists, there has to be a clear understanding of what each one does. There needs to be an appreciation on both teams for the various skills and how they impact the security of the door.

Building that appreciation requires a lot of education.



At SAF, all technicians on both sides go through extensive training and they also provide cross-training between the teams. Because SAF has developed their own interactive learning center, the training can be more frequent and conducted in-house.

"While they maintain core competencies, our techs know enough about the other side to work collaboratively. This makes the job go more smoothly—for us and especially for our customers," says Joe Cloutre, EVP and Managing Partner, SAF Technologies, Inc.

Getting to the point of having such a cohesive team took time, Cloutre says.

"It's an enormous commitment," he says. "It's not easy—if it was, then, everyone would be doing it."

Cloutre believes it's more than just putting two disciplines together.

"We've done this cautiously and strategically, making sure we had the right culture, leadership and follow-through to make it successful," he says.



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Build from within

Adding the door hardware service could be done in-house, like SAF chose to do, or through selective contract partners.

Gaulden suggests looking internally first.

“A lot of integrators may have been locksmiths, or may have commercial mechanical hardware experience,” he says. “A great starting point is to survey your staff to see what skill sets they have.”

Next, he recommends partnering with manufacturer partners for additional training.

Allegion, for example, provides training on both our mechanical and electronic solutions so teams can receive the latest working knowledge on locks, closers and technologies that are in our portfolio.

Invest now

Customers don't want to call multiple people to fix a problem. Be their one-stop solution. Invest in building a team that brings together a complete solution—one that combines door hardware and integration. In the end, by doing what's best for your customers, you'll make yourself more valuable—indispensable, really. You'll create lasting relationships that will grow your business.

If you want an Allegion integrator sales rep to assist your client, contact us today [online](#) or by calling 888-758-9823.

About Allegion

Allegion (NYSE: ALLE) is a global pioneer in safety and security, with leading brands like CISA®, Interflex®, LCN®, Schlage®, SimonsVoss® and Von Duprin®. Focusing on security around the door and adjacent areas, Allegion produces a range of solutions for homes, businesses, schools and other institutions. Allegion is a \$2 billion company, with products sold in almost 130 countries. For more, visit www.allegion.com.

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011458 Rev. 12/2016
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