A decentralized approach that enforces accountability can improve security's results.

In virtually every organizational model, responsibility and accountability go hand in hand. This concept is no less true in the lodging industry. For example, the food and beverage manager is responsible for ensuring that quality meals are served to guests. If guests are satisfied, the food and beverage manager receives the credit. If the guests express dissatisfaction with their dining experience, the same manager is subject to criticism. Unfortunately, the same management scheme is not applied to security, which is often either ignored or ill-managed, leaving gaping holes in guest protection.

To address the problem, a new approach to hotel security--which the author calls hotel protection management--is being explored. It is the basis for an academic model under consideration at scores of colleges and universities that offer hotel management degrees. And the author suggests that it should also be adopted as a new management tool by hotels.

This unique management approach entails decentralizing the security function--making it the responsibility of all departments. The rationale for adopting this potentially controversial management concept is that hotel security--or more accurately, guest protection--cannot hope to succeed to the level mandated by the courts unless specific security duties belong to the designated nonsecurity personnel most able to ensure their completion. In addition, each department manager must be accountable for the successful accomplishment of those assignments.

Hotel protection management takes an approach contrary to the "bigger and expanded security department" thinking that has permeated lodging security for decades. It improves security's reach and effectiveness by a different course.

Some security professionals may initially react to this new approach with the dismissive view that "On my property, everyone is already responsible for guest protection." In practice, however, without the requirement of protection task accountability, the "everyone is responsible" scenario results in a situation in which no one is responsible.

So how can accountability be ensured? The first step is to focus senior management's attention on the hotel's legal responsibility. As security professionals know, the courts have determined that the lodging industry must provide a specific level of protection to guests--that being the duty of "reasonable care." This tenet forms the basis of hotel protection management; everything builds from there.

Stated another way, hotel protection management takes the unusual position that every function within the hotel--from the food and beverage department to housekeeping to sales and engineering--ought to
be viewed as, in some sense, subordinate to guest protection. That extraordinary position is based on two facts: the aforementioned legal duty to protect the guest, and the proposition that the guest is the asset most critical to a hotel's business success. It is then logical to determine that protecting this paramount asset, the guest, must be the prime concern of a property.

For the traditional hotel security manager, this may, at first blush, seem to be a gift from heaven--security elevated to its rightful position. But properly implemented under the hotel protection management model, this restructuring has far-reaching implications--and some security managers may not embrace them. Essentially, hotel protection management takes the position that guest protection is simply too complex and too vital to be the exclusive responsibility and domain of a security department. The responsibility must be borne--both functionally and from an accountability standpoint--equally by all departments.

To this basic assumption, the traditional hotel security manager might balk. However, the theory of hotel protection management is that the hotel security manager who adapts to this approach will be elevated along with his or her function.

**The committee.**

At the heart of this new approach to security is the protection management committee. Traditionally, safety committees have been responsible for reviewing safety concerns and recommending remedial action when appropriate, but their agenda and authority have often been limited. The new model suggests replacing this type of committee with a proactive protection management committee that has expanded responsibility, specifically with regard to crime against the guest.

This committee, which should at a minimum include the head of each department, should be led by the hotel's general manager. The general manager will use this committee as an accountability tool to force every manager to give security the priority it must have if guest protection is to succeed.

Typically, a large hotel has eight departments, each with a manager or director who reports directly to the general manager. Departments include food and beverage, personnel, engineering, front office, sales, controller, housekeeping, and security. (Individual hotels may differ.)

The food and beverage manager is responsible for the conduct of that department and held accountable when and if problems arise--and so on for each department. But when a guest is assaulted or property is stolen from a guest room, who is held directly accountable? In practice, no clear lines of responsibility exist under traditional security structures. Using the hotel protection management approach and the protection management committee, a general manager can ensure accountability.
New twist.
Traditional security strategies still apply, but are given a slightly different twist. For example, it is traditional to begin with a security survey. That is also the first step under hotel protection management. Before responsibilities can be assigned through the committee, the hotel must do a security survey to identify and examine the assets in need of protection. Next, a threat assessment determines the threats to which assets are or may be exposed.

But hotel protection management holds that these first two steps should be carried out by the general manager--perhaps with the security manager--but they should not be conducted by the security manager alone. The reasoning is as follows: while most general managers argue that they know their property thoroughly, most do not. Hotel protection management takes the position that this void is unacceptable, that the general manager must be made to know the property intimately. By conducting the initial security survey, the general manager sees firsthand the specific profile of the assets to be protected, the identity and nature of the threats that may, or indeed do, threaten those assets, and the countermeasures currently in place. Because "seeing is believing," general managers who walk the property may be more committed to allocating funds and other resources to address security's weak points.

In part, hotel protection management is also based on the premise that general managers of the future will have had, as part of their college curriculum, courses that give them a foundation in security issues. Where that is not the case, the security manager's assistance during the survey, threat assessment, and countermeasure phases will be critical.

Action plan.
The survey itself is diagnostic, not remedial. After the survey and threat assessment have been completed, the general manager, with the assistance of the committee, is ready to develop a menu of countermeasures to minimize the threats.

The diagnostic survey and analysis are presented to the committee for its evaluation and action. The group then determines not only whether existing countermeasures are appropriate and effective but also whether any countermeasures should be eliminated, added, or modified. For example, the survey may reveal that security lighting is adequate but that replacing fixtures is costly. The committee may then direct the person in charge of lighting to find a way to extend the life-span of fixtures or to investigate whether alternative fixtures might be more cost-effective.
The action plan that will guide the committee is founded on the hotel protection management tenet that there are eight--and only eight--countermeasures management can use to counteract the threat of crime. (These also are the eight countermeasures against which the general manager measures his property during the security survey.) They are:

- preemployment screening
- staffwide training
- access control
- lighting
- key control
- security officers
- guest room protection
- emergency response

Security professionals are familiar with each of these, although they may not necessarily have categorized them exactly this way. The hotel protection management model proposes that general managers be taught--as part of their college curriculum--how each of these countermeasures relates to hotel security.

They would, for example, learn the importance of training the entire property staff--not just security personnel--in the methods and techniques of guest protection. Such training in the following scenarios would be appropriate:

- Training the housekeeping staff to allow only specifically identified authorized persons into rooms.
- Training the front desk staff in proper guest confidentiality techniques such as not verbalizing the number of the room being rented to the guest.
- Training maintenance and engineering personnel in proper guest room key production and storage control. For example, emphasizing that blank, extra, and unused keys be stored in a secure, locked cabinet, and that the number of employees with access to the cabinet be controlled.

With the survey and threat assessment data in hand, the protection management committee must:

- Examine each threat vis a vis each asset, including foreseeability issues and considering existing countermeasures.
- Determine collectively the validity and completeness of the general manager's findings.
- Determine which of the countermeasures are appropriate, which are adequate, and which are lacking.
- Decide under the direction of the general manager, and often with the assistance of the security manager, which countermeasures are to be the responsibility of each manager.

In response to this last point, traditionalists in the security field may cry "heresy." They will object to "protection by committee."
I would urge these security professionals to keep an open mind. In its full measure, this model allows for better control, better protection, and better accountability than current practice.

The assignment of a countermeasure—complete with responsibilities for its installation, maintenance, and continued effectiveness—must not be haphazard. When possible, each security assignment should complement other duties. Consider the countermeasure of guest room protection. Historically, this responsibility has fallen under the purview of the security manager. But the hotel protection management model poses the question, "Who is better qualified than the executive housekeeper to manage this countermeasure?"

No one knows the rooms better than the housekeepers who tend them. No one is inside each and every room more than the housekeeper. No one has a bigger stake in the housekeeping of rooms than the executive housekeeper. Why not, therefore, give the responsibility of guest room protection to that manager?

Can he or she handle such a task? Consider:

That manager already best knows the condition (vulnerability) of each guest room.

He or she, under this scenario, will have been provided with the security survey carried out by the general manager and will have been part of the committee's thorough analysis of those findings, including existing and recommended countermeasures.

As an outgrowth of the committee's efforts, the executive housekeeper will have a checklist of what constitutes a safe and secure guest room. That checklist can serve both as a training tool for housekeepers and as a measurement they can apply to each room to ensure that security is in place.

Under the hotel protection management model, the executive housekeeper has the entire protection management committee, which includes the security director and the general manager, as resources. Further, this person was hired, presumably, not as a room cleaning functionary, but as a manager. Thus, asking him or her to manage that portion of the security function is reasonable and logical.

Similarly, one might assign the countermeasure of preemployment screening to the security manager. Initially, the personnel manager might seem to be the more logical choice. However, the security professional's investigative skills, database resources, and general eye for detecting "red flags" make him or her better able to weed out problem candidates.
**Accountability.**
The final step under the hotel protection management model is for each manager to actually carry out the protection duties in each assigned area—to be responsible and accountable for the installation, maintenance, and continued working order of the relevant devices and measures agreed to by the committee. Each department head should be diligent in overseeing and monitoring whether procedures suggested by the protection management committee are being followed.

The committee should meet monthly to reassess the appropriateness of countermeasures, discuss changes in assets or threats, and address performance of duties to ensure accountability. The responsibility for each security item should be a line item on each department's or manager's performance report, making security a quantifiable and documented responsibility for every manager—not just the security manager.

Perhaps it would help if this approach is thought of not as protection by committee but rather as protection by cooperation, by joint effort, by validation and mutual assistance. Hotel protection management might also be thought of as a way of bringing to hotel security the empowerment and team-building models that are being used effectively elsewhere in the business world to enhance productivity and worker participation.

While the traditional security professional might initially view this approach as cause for concern—because of the implicit loss of control—the result is more likely to be that, with the elevation of protection to the highest concerns on a property, the security manager's experience and knowledge will be in greater demand and his or her advice will be more readily sought and appreciated.

Most importantly, security managers will be surrounded by allies. The general manager will convey the important premise that every department on a property has a part to play in guest protection.

The hotel management protection strategy will help ensure that those roles are understood and that proper training is provided, along with clear assignments of responsibility and accountability, making everyone a partner in the protection program.

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