

PREFACE

Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the wise. Seek what they sought.

Matsuo Basho, poet

Hotel Security Director. How many of you grew up dreaming of becoming a Hotel Security Director? I don't see many hands going up. The reality is that not very many of us aspired to this position or ever imagined ourselves in this career. We seem to evolve from two different worlds. See if one of these backgrounds describes you. The first comes from retired military or law enforcement. This professional has succeeded in his or her first chosen field of endeavor and now, for whatever reason, is taking on a logical next step. The second background type is the corporate climber. These career security professionals have started at some entry-level position in a hospitality company and proved their loyalty and knowledge to someone.

In both cases, the new Hotel Security Director comes to the position somewhat unprepared. Don't get me wrong. I do not question the knowledge, experience, or dedication of any security manager. I simply offer that, unlike the lawyer, doctor, cop, or soldier, there are few job-based learning or academic programs that actually train us how to do this job.

So, in the absence of a degree in Hotel Security Management, where does one acquire the knowledge necessary to excel in this career? There are many resources for management—even security management—but not much for Hotel Security Management. Those of us who have worked in the hospitality industry for any length of time know that there are just as many differences from other industries as there are similarities.

I suppose you could trace the history of hotels back to biblical times. As long as people have traveled, they have needed places to stay. The hotel industry has evolved right alongside the travel industry and tourism. Hotel Security, however, only dates back a few decades. In the early and mid-twentieth century, hotel detectives were hired to investigate the same crimes we still see today and to protect the occasional visiting dignitary.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, one major thing happened to the travel industry—jet airliners. People traveling more often, farther from home, and for longer periods needed more hotels. The hotel security detective started to evolve around the same time. After casinos gained some notoriety in Las Vegas, they started to build huge hotels to attract affluent guests and entertainment. At first, these properties hired small security forces to protect their fortunes. The focus then was on protecting the money, catching cheaters, and keeping the undesirables out.

As corporations took over management of these resorts, they developed the mega-resort. Security departments grew and it did not take long to learn that protection was needed not just for the money, but to protect the guests from scammers, con artists, and other guests. A 5,000-room hotel/casino has many more issues of internal theft, property loss, and accidents than it ever does with theft and robbery of casino funds.

By the 1980s, lawyers were finding the hotel/casino accident business to be quite lucrative. Courts in Nevada were assigning some premise liability to those property owners.

Hotels all over the world, many of them with franchises in Las Vegas, realized that they needed a security force to protect themselves from the guests as well as the criminals. Today, we find most hotels of medium size have full-time security and, more importantly, a Security Director to prevent problems as well as resolve them.

I offer that brief perspective to impress upon you the importance of prevention. Many Security Directors in hotels think of themselves as police chiefs of their own small town with a private police force. While a large hotel functions just like a city, we have a different duty of preventing problems. While a police chief or sheriff is tasked with upholding laws, our responsibility is “protection of assets.” While catching bad guys, solving crimes, putting out fires, and breaking up fights are some of the things we do, they do not necessarily protect or prevent anything.

Whether you are the only manager of a small motel or a Chief Security Officer of a large hospitality chain, this book is for you. The security function does not change based on the size of the facility. Your success as a Security Director will depend on your ability to prevent bad things, not respond to them. This confounds many security professionals because it is hard to prove success based on things that did not happen. However, the rest of us—and your bosses—know that a Security Department that sees less crime and maintains a safe and comfortable environment for its guests is the most successful of all.

Having managed one and visited most of the largest and busiest Security departments in the world, I always think I have seen it all—and, of course, I haven’t. But I have taken each of those unique incidents and worked them backward to find how they could be prevented. I believe every incident is preventable and it is our job to decide if the prevention is practical and affordable. I encourage you to share your stories and the steps you took to prevent incidents from recurring. The safety of our guests and employees in the hospitality business is success for all of us.

In the chapters that follow, I have endeavored to include at least an introduction of everything you need to know to operate a Security Department in a hotel, nightclub, amusement park, or any other hospitality venue. It is experience-based, proven methods for preventing and resolving the challenges faced by today’s hospitality practitioner. Whether you are new to this position, aspiring to meet this challenge, or are a veteran of our exclusive club, you will find some valuable information contained herein. You will either learn best practices or validate those that you already employ. One of our favorite axioms, “If it isn’t written, it didn’t happen,” can certainly be applied to this book. Successful security methods cannot be shared and hold their value without being documented.

Reading this book cover to cover is certainly the best way to get its full value, as there are industry standards and best practices throughout. However, some may find it more useful as a reference guide to be consulted for specific methods and procedures. As for standards, you will learn early in the next two chapters that our industry has few. We have developed, over the last several hundred years, some preferred methods that we call “Best Practices.” Standards, Best Practices, and personal preferences are referenced and identified as such. Keep in mind that many of these security methods are subjective and vary with not only opinion, but also the type of establishment, its location, and its management. If they are successful, then they are not wrong, so consider ideas that oppose your own as alternatives.