

Program Best Practices > Security Officers >

Optimize Security Forces for Cost Savings and Quality Assurance

A security department's guard force or uniformed security officer program is frequently one of the priciest line items in the function's budget. For that reason, it's also one of the programs most frequently targeted in budget reductions.

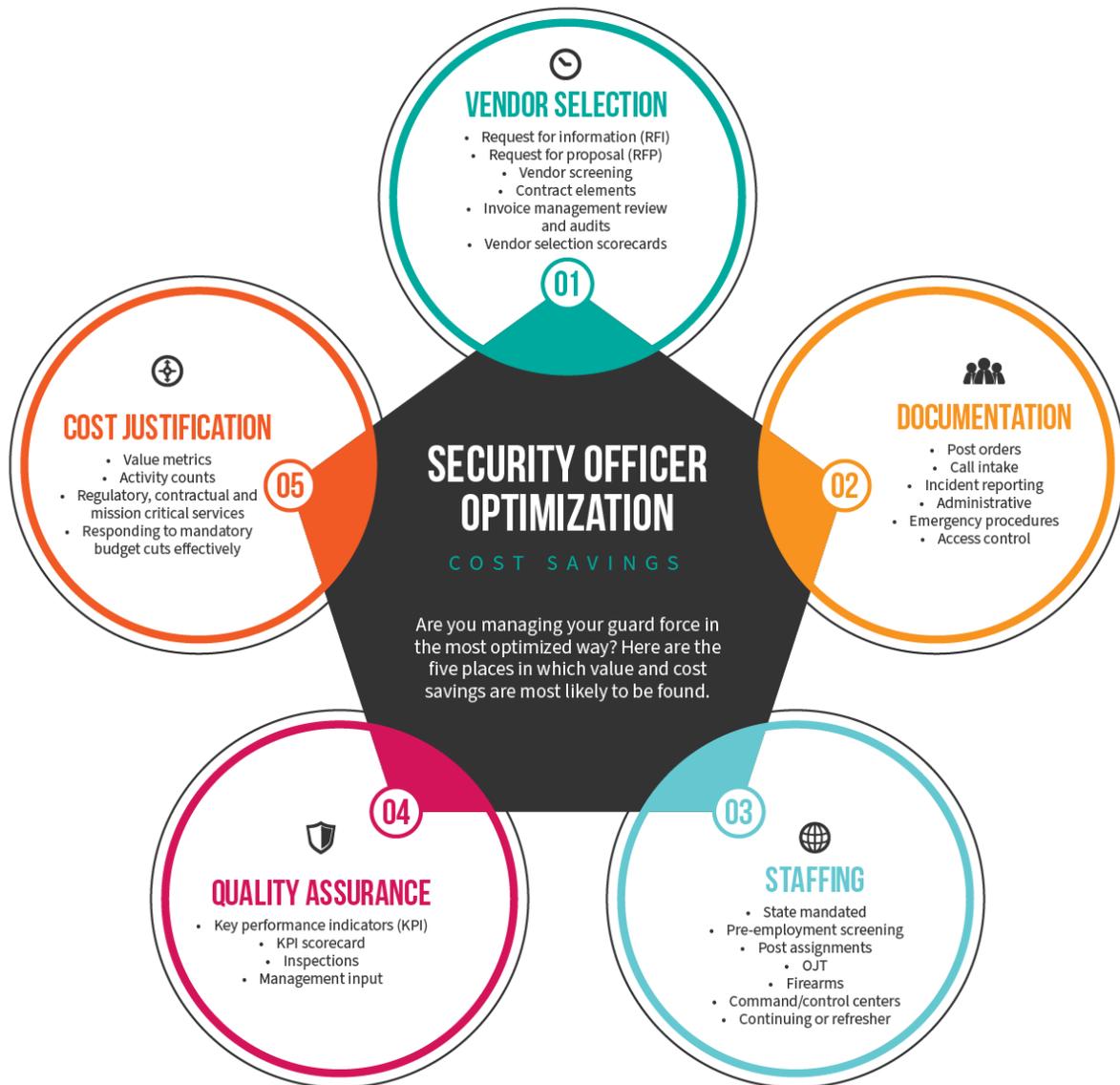
In the SEC's May 2023 Security State of the Industry: Security Force Optimization, Emeritus Faculty Chris Schaeffer and Subject Matter Expert Bill King joined Managing Director Bob Hayes, EVP and Chief Knowledge Strategist Kathleen Kotwica, and Director of Tier 1 Leader Services and Projects Liz Lancaster-Brisson to discuss how security leaders can make the most of their companies' security force investment, reducing cost while limiting product loss and better protecting people.

Optimization doesn't mean overhaul. It often involves making a series of small changes.

Bill King shared the example of a former client that was losing money when truck loads were being delivered to the wrong locations. "I recommended to the client that they have officers check the bill of lading against the trailer number before trucks left. As soon as they implemented this, they discovered many trucks having picked up the wrong trailers. This simple process saved the company a lot of money."

Chris Schaffer offered a few examples of how specific training can reduce lawsuits and insurance costs. "In my 30 years of experience doing this," he said, "if my security forces could find a way to hit something with a vehicle, it would happen. And looking back, a driving program would definitely have helped reduce costs. Another one – if you choose to have armed security -- would be training against accidental discharge. How do you train your security forces to load and unload their weapons? Wherever an accidental discharge occurs, it will likely result in a lawsuit, and it will definitely cause a contract disruption as you have a safety stand down."

The SEC has helped security leaders optimize their security forces in five key areas.



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In this SSOI, presenters focused on Vendor Selection, Quality Assurance, and Cost Justification. Here are some highlights of the presentation.

Vendor Selection

Optimization begins with one of the very first steps of vendor selection: developing an RFP.

When crafting a request for proposals, you must be clear about what you want and anticipate future needs in as much detail as possible. What will you need a year from now? Two years

from now? The RFP must include enough information to allow vendors to understand if they have the capacity to meet the needs of your organization and to respond with accurately priced bids.

It should include specifics on how the company will be billed and when, what training will be required of the security force, what equipment the vendor is expected to provide and what equipment the company will provide – even emergency clauses that stipulate whether and to what extent the security force will be required to respond in the event of a crisis or natural disaster.

“In 2016 when the hurricanes hit in Florida, we found that 90% of our security officers were affected by the storms, so they weren’t available to provide their normal services or the additional required services,” said King. “If you don’t want to have this problem, spell it out up front. Clients who had emergency coverage in their contracts during that time got first dibs on security officers, who were having to be pulled from throughout the country.”

The structure and key performance requirements laid out in a strong RFP should result in better training and lower turnover – meaning less cost from day one. But many security leaders put inadequate thought and planning into RFP development. Because the RFP outlines your expectations of the vendor, underthinking this step can result in a relationship filled with misunderstanding and misalignment – or no relationship at all. Bill King referred to one client whose RFP was so far removed from what they actually wanted from their vendor that they ended up having to scrap everything and start anew on the process.

Once the proposals are in, create an evaluation team of stakeholders in the program, clearly defining each member’s role. Use a detailed vendor scorecard to rate the proposals. Then, select three to five finalists and ask each one to present to the team. Important note here: Specify that you need the vendor’s local management team to make this presentation rather than its sales team. This will give you a chance to interact with the individuals you will be working with directly.

Quality Assurance

Key performance indicators drive how officers are evaluated and determine the health and compliance of the program. Develop KPIs that are measurable and obtainable and try to focus on five main KPIs or less. Because KPIs can change over the life of the contract, plan to review them quarterly to ensure they still meet your needs.

Don’t neglect to audit your contracts, said Schaffer. “Something I saw while running a national security program for DHS and the U.S. Coast Guard – we reviewed around 4,000 facility security and industrial security programs, and we found that most companies didn’t have a formalized audit program, either internally or third party. Regular audit is a best business practice, but in some cases it’s also a regulatory requirement. If you have an MTSA facility or a CFATS facility, you are required to conduct an audit.” Neglecting to do this both misses an opportunity for

quality assurance and puts the organization at risk of fines.

Have regularly scheduled meetings with your vendor. It's a good idea to meet monthly even if there are no problems to discuss. You can still talk about new ideas, upcoming events, progress on existing plans, changes in threat assessments, and data on criminal activities. Expect your vendor to bring something of value to each meeting.

Make sure you have a single point of contact for officer guidance. King discussed a client company that asked him to come in to find the root cause of high officer turnover. He discovered that the client hadn't established any specific guidance, had implemented minimal procedures, and offered no clear point of contact for the officers to receive guidance. Without a clear single point of contact, officers were left with mixed messages and confusion, which frustrated them enough to leave the job.

Cost Justification

Quantifying prevention can be complicated, but it's important to track all the savings you can. Use available data to quantify the cost savings in prevention of loss and prevention of incidents and damages. Look at insurance savings and reduction in lawsuits.

Also look at how optimization helps avoid fines. Schaffer remarked that DHS, in which he previously served, issued a large number of fines, and more than \$20 million of those were related to guard forces, security forces, and access control. These violations accounted for most of the fines levied by the agency, and they can be as expensive as \$25,000 per day.

Keep a log of times when officers on after-hours patrol discover and deal with issues that wouldn't otherwise have been managed. King shared a story of an officer noticing a light on in an office and discovering, when he went to investigate, that the staff member inside had suffered a heart attack. Without the quick assistance of the officer, that staff member would not have lived.

Encourage officers to share stories of assistance provided that may be impactful even if it's hard to quantify – such as appreciation expressed by employees who feel safer walking to their cars after dark with officer escorts.

Sometimes the best way to justify cost is to integrate technology with security force operations. Work with the vendor to determine options to both save money and enhance performance by implementing technology that augments the guard force, such as CCTV and alarms with a central monitoring system.

Next Steps

The SEC can help with all five phases of security force optimization. We offer documentation review, program and services review, risk/organizational alignment, vendor selection

assistance, contract and regulatory review, and more.

What are your questions about security officer optimization? Our subject matter experts are ready to help. [Contact us](#) for a free one-hour discussion.

Visit the Security Executive Council web site to view more resources in the [Program Best Practices : Security Officers](#) series.

About the Security Executive Council

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Contact us at: contact@secleader.com

Website: <https://www.securityexecutivecouncil.com/>