

Alarming Trends

Storage operators and managers educate themselves on new security technology.

By John Dunlap

For many people attending the recent SSA Fall Conference & Trade Show in Las Vegas, the trade show itself is a little like being a kid at Disney World for the first time: there is so much to see, so many new products to admire. The bells and whistles just keep on coming. And for those attendees particularly interested in what is happening in the world of security, this year's show was especially exciting.

SSA *Globe* interviewed a number of attendees about their particular security concerns and how they were addressing them.

The constant theme? Security is still a top priority to self storage owner/operators and managers. The ability to put customers' minds at ease and present a safe and responsible facility still remains one of the best ways to bring in new customers and keep the ones you have feeling contented.

But here's a twist on that theme: Owner/operators are taking a long, hard look at what they have and whether it measures up to these changing times. And many are deciding that security is a topic that needs to be revisited every four to five years.

The newest theme? Amazing advances in technology, notably the changes going on to eliminate easy access for interlopers through the front gate, lackluster camera quality and old padlocks on unit doors. The changes incorporate wireless and cellphone technology. In fact, a customer can now open the front gate and unlock their units before they ever arrive at the facility from the comfort of their car. And managers can know exactly who is on their property.

Upgrading a 30-year Old Facility

Patricia Hughes manages the All-American Self Storage facility in San Mateo, California.

Her problem is not the popularity of the facility, since 98 percent of her 1,500 units are occupied. Rather, Hughes wants to totally revamp her existing security system—and the old ways just can't keep up anymore.



Patricia Hughes of San Mateo, California, visits with Jon Loftin of PTI Security during the SSA Conference & Trade Show in Las Vegas this past September.

“There is just no way we can realistically go with a wired system,” she said. “The cost and effort to replace the current wiring would just be too much. We are looking for a whole new system. Clearly, wireless is the way to go. I really like the idea of the swiping keypad where customers can pay when they swipe. I also like the alarmed doors and think a real premium should be put on good lighting and dependable cameras placed in the proper areas.”

Hughes concluded that security “should be foremost in a facility’s mind when it comes to current customers and those who are considering becoming customers.”

Upgrade Every Four Years

Stephanie Thorpe is the operations and marketing specialist for A+ Management Group in Nashville, Tennessee. The organization has had as many as 12 facilities and recently sold five. It is looking to grow, and to do

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Tim Burnam, VP Development and Construction, StorageMart.

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that Thorpe is well aware of the need for her company to invest in solid security.

“You either get ahead or get left behind,” said Thorpe. “We need some operation upgrades and actually feel that upgrades probably need to be done every four years or so. We want to have A-class facilities and realize that staying ahead of our competitors is so important.”

Thorpe is particularly enamored with the concept of managers having the ability to keep up with comings and goings at their respective facilities both at work and at home. She likes the idea of wireless coverage and system controllers like PTI’s DigiGate, which manages devices for facility access and exit, timed activities and alarm monitoring.

“You really have to stay on top of the latest developments in security,” added Thorpe. “I’m really excited by the things I’m seeing here at the SSA’s trade show. I’m learning more and more about the better way to go about upgrading our security systems.”

Easy Access Makes a Difference

For Gary Cardamone, CEO of The Nuvo Company in Winter Park, Florida, the new apps that allow access to a

“Access is a huge point for owner/operators and managers to consider...”

Gary Cardamone,
The Nuvo Company



facility and open units from a person’s car are especially appealing.

“Access is a huge point for owner/operators and managers to consider,” Cardamone said. “We get a lot of rain in Florida, and making it so customers can avoid having to deal with that rain is a big deal.”

Cardamone’s company is a diversified holdings company that includes e-payment solutions for self storage under the brand name SBOA Merchant Services and builds and develops new self storage facility sites (having developed almost 1 million square feet since 1998). The Nuvo

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Company is also at the forefront of developing more natural light opportunities at new facilities.

“As an e-payment solution company, I also am very interested in the new point-of-sale technology,” he said. “I’ve seen some brilliant products here in Las Vegas. I also am very excited about new access controls and making sure that facilities are really well lit.”

Keep Up!

It is clear that the owner/operators in Las Vegas understood the value of visiting with security experts at the SSA trade show, which included Sentinel Systems, QuikStor and PTI Security. Most of them asked detailed questions and expected detailed answers.

“I came to the PTI Security booth to see if they might have solutions that would keep us ahead of the game,” said Thorpe. “We saw some things we really liked and they made every effort to address our concerns.”

“I was really interested in finding out about the latest in wireless technology for our facility and my eyes have been opened,” added Hughes.

As one might expect, PTI Security Systems, like all security companies, has an interest in virtually everything that these three customers have mentioned. And CEO



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Stephanie Thorpe
A+ Management Group

Lance Comstock is attempting to make sure that they are all addressed, primarily with new technology that his company offers.

“The future is here,” said Comstock. “The future of everything in security now rests with the ability to be mobile. And it remains our job to listen to customers and prospective customers to find out what matters most to them.”

Undeniably, self storage security technology keeps marching forward. The key is whether owner/operators and managers are willing to keep up. Many of the customers at the SSA gathering in Las Vegas seemed to have an eye cast firmly on the future. ❖

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