

Safe hands



Sebastian Morley talks through the challenges of, and key to, providing effective security in the 21st century to the events industry

Once reserved for state and government meetings, effective security is now a vital part of any event. But what do we mean by ‘security’, how is it evolving and what challenges does it raise?

Sebastian Morley is co-founder and Managing Director of Vigilant, a company specialising in high-end, boutique security services, training and consultancy – and provides the security at the EICC.

According to Sebastian, the definition and remit of security have both become much broader.

“The security market has changed significantly – it’s not a question of an old man sitting in a night watchman’s hut any more,” he says. “Now it’s very much integrated into the fabric and personnel of a building, into its facilities, and its systems. The security badge now involves everyone from the receptionists at the front of house to the workers in the loading bay at the back.”

Among the different factors exerting an influence on the direction of security, Sebastian highlights ever-evolving advances in technology. When CCTV was first introduced in 1968, he says, it was hailed as a revolution in crime fighting. Yet the introduction of wireless CCTV decades later has made a degree of surveillance possible that was previously unimaginable. “I can monitor security cameras across the world on the smartphone I keep in my pocket,” he says. “That’s very useful technology.”

However, technology alone is not enough. “It can have a very important role in enhancing security, but only if it is monitored and verified by people trained to use and interpret it,” says Sebastian. “If it’s not closely monitored by the

human eye it will let you down. The greatest challenge over the coming years will be to balance the ever-changing integrated systems we can provide with complementary personnel.”

The right people

The ‘human element’ is integral to Vigilant. It employs a very stringent selection process, recruiting the vast majority of its staff from the Commonwealth armed forces.

Sebastian – who, along with the rest of Vigilant’s directors, served in the historic Black Watch regiment – says this is because ex-military personnel have very specific skills that are ideally suited to effective security provision.

“The first important thing is presentation,” he says. “It’s second nature for soldiers to look as smart as possible and take pride in their appearance and uniform and, straight away, that makes a statement that’s both professional and reassuring. And ‘front of house’ is very important because, in many cases, a security

officer is the first ambassador for the venue that a visitor will see.

“In addition, ex-military personnel tend to have excellent timekeeping, and a very strong sense of discipline – both in terms of self-discipline and in terms of working within a disciplined environment, with sound management and direction.

“Finally, the basic principles of security are something that one learns as a soldier, and that actually becomes ingrained. Alertness, observation, the ability to identify risk and react quickly, all the while interacting with members of the public – these are all skills that are essential to military personnel and transfer very well to the security profession in a civilian context.”

Adaptability without compromise

Another challenge in providing security specifically for events that Sebastian identifies, is the need to adapt to individual requirements.

“Identifying which events require the strictest security and pose the greatest challenges is important, because

FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SECURITY

#1 Presentation

Vigilant security guards are the first faces that greet visitors to the EICC. Immaculate presentation ensures that clients are impressed before they even enter the building.

#2 Reassurance

The smart turnout of guards provides immediate safety reassurance and acts as an initial line of deterrence for any potential security breach.

#3 Training

The art of good service begins with detailed site-specific training. Our distinguished Training Manager knows the EICC and certifies that all guards on-site are fully trained for their individual roles.

#4 Systems

The ability to integrate a core guarding force with state-of-the-art systems helps assure the most proficient security service possible.

#5 Support

Guards need to be supported by a close knit management team. The officers at the EICC are backed up by our Operations Manager and Director who make regular visits to site.

CONSTANT PRESENCE

Vigilant security has a full-time team of eight security specialists based at the EICC 24 hours-a-day. To cater for the individual needs of specific events, Vigilant is able to draft in further personnel from its ranks of over 400 highly trained ex-servicemen and women, assuring the highest quality security and peace of mind.

it's something that can vary widely. It depends on a number of factors, including what's out of fashion and in the news at the time. So being aware of and sensitive to that is also very important."

And at the EICC, catering as it does for a broad range of national and international events across many sectors, stringent security of the highest quality also needs to be modelled around the needs of the client.

"The EICC offers a very wide range of events, and we provide the security for all of these, right the way through the building," Sebastian explains. "A permanent staff is based at the Centre, and they are joined by further personnel – according to the needs of each individual event. We ascertain these requirements by liaising with both the EICC event management team and their clients. So we provide a bespoke service."

Whilst providing assurance that the highest level of security is paramount, it is also important to ensure that visitors feel at ease and are able to move freely throughout the building. And the EICC is particularly well designed to facilitate this, as Sebastian explains.

He adds: "Access to the EICC has been very well thought out. That means there is both an easy flow for delegates to go into the conference centre and a very effective buffer zone between the access control and the buffer areas. This makes it easier for us to monitor that access control without being obtrusive."



2 MAIN ENTRANCE - EICC

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