Security Needs of Property Managers

Property management companies have a special interest in the features and benefits of access control, and are strong candidates for managed access control services. Clients rely on their property management companies to oversee the operation of a variety of multi-tenant commercial properties that include:

- Malls of all sizes
- Multi-store retail facilities
- Professional office buildings
- Commercial suites

On the residential side, building owners or owner associations rely on property managers to care for properties that include:

- Apartment buildings
- Multi-family housing
- Condominiums

For both commercial and residential facilities, the management companies typically take care of all tenant and building services. They manage leasing and rent collection, advertising and marketing, facility maintenance and grounds keeping, utilities, and all other aspects of day-to-day operation. More importantly for the security dealer, the property manager is also responsible for the security of the general facility and common areas, as well as for each tenant's space.

Mechanical Locks vs Electronic Access

Building owners rely on their property manager to free them from the headaches of day-to-day operational responsibilities. When the property manager takes on those headaches from a large number of clients, they begin to develop headaches of their own! A special headache is the problem of securing the dozens or hundreds of separate spaces within a facility.

In any rented space, occupant turnover is a way of life. There is a constant stream of tenants coming and going. That creates a special physical security problem. Each time a tenant leaves, the property manager typically collects the keys. Still, to ensure the security of the new tenant, responsible property managers will also change the locks, and must often do so quickly. Especially in residential properties, evictions are common. Disgruntled ex-tenants must be prevented from re-entering the building and possibly causing vandalism.

Managing the rekeying or replacing of locks can require almost constant attention from a locksmith. Access control greatly simplifies this security issue.

There is also the issue of replacing locks that simply wear out or malfunction. In high-traffic commercial facilities and the common areas of residential facilities, the wear and tear on mechanical locks is a special concern. In addition, it's common for renters to be less than careful with their landlord's facilities and equipment. This rough use further adds to lock maintenance problems. Electronic access control systems using electromagnetic locks offer the advantage of outlasting their mechanical counterparts because there are no moving parts to wear out.

For many property management companies, locksmith costs can be a significant monthly expense. Property managers may be eager to make the switch from paying for old and troublesome mechanical security methods when presented with the long list of advantages offered by electronic access control.

Many Needs for Managed Access

It's common for property management companies to have someone on call around the clock to deal with various property issues. Late night and weekend phone calls are routine for property managers. Some of these calls relate to maintenance issues … power outages, plumbing problems, or heating.
But the most frequent calls property managers receive are from tenants who lock themselves out of their residential space or commercial suite. This requires the property management representative to meet the locked-out tenant at the site to unlock the door. If ever there was a golden opportunity for managed access control, this is it.

The property management company will, no doubt, appreciate the great time savings for their employees who can now remotely grant access to the locked-out tenant. If those savings don't provide strong enough motivation to consider managed access control, there's also the customer service benefit. While tenants understand that they typically have no one to blame but themselves for being locked out, they will still be aggravated by the wait for their property manager to arrive and let them in.

Tenants will be greatly pleased with the incredibly fast response available to lock-out situations from property managers that rely on managed access control. Within a minute of the tenant's call to the property manager, they will find their doors remotely unlocked as if by magic.

For every property, managed access control will typically enhance the security of the facility, a sales point the property manager can make with prospective tenants. A facility serviced by managed access control also projects an image of technical sophistication, further enhancing the prospect's impression of the property.

Commercial facilities, and to a lesser extent residential complexes, are typically serviced by a number of third party providers working for the property manager … cleaning crews, painters, maintenance people, etc. Much of the service in commercial buildings is done at night, when the building is empty. Electronic access control creates much stronger security than conventional locks, with access credentials that allow service and maintenance people to enter only at certain times and to only enter defined places, while providing an audit trail of each user's comings and goings.

Managed access control offers additional benefits to the property manager that works with outside service providers. The property manager can rely on their security professionals to manage the credentialing process, and receive routine reports that provide a record of each service provider's time on the job.

In the event of a security breach in any individual tenant's space, the access log will prove to be valuable data that may assist the client in their investigation.

Many Users Creates Many Benefits

In some managed access control applications, there are a relatively small and stable number of employees with access credentials. Still, the ability of system end users to simply call their access control service provider to add, change, or cancel a user's credentials provides real time savings.

For property managers, that benefit is multiplied many times in commercial buildings where there will be many different tenants, each with a number of employees. Managing the credentials for this large and diverse population … adding, deleting, and changing user access data … could be a significant burden on the property manager. That's a burden they may be more than willing to hand off to a managed access control provider.

In residential facilities, the volume of credential activities will vary with the size of facilities and the nature of the property. Some are very stable, with the same tenants staying many years. Other facilities have relatively high turnover, with tenants coming and going every few months. These higher turnover facilities obviously present a stronger opportunity for managed access control.

A Well-Understood Value Proposition

Property managers are typically paid a monthly fee to provide their services. They have a clear understanding of why it's beneficial to rely on qualified, professional third-party resources to provide specific services because it's the business model that they rely on. They don't need to be convinced of this value proposition because it's the proposition they offer to their clients. The business model that works with their customers mirrors the managed access control model that you can offer them.

Property managers also understand the benefits of maintaining the smallest vendor base possible. They appreciate the ability to consolidate several services with a single provider because it reduces their administrative costs and typically results in a lower total cost through bundled services. The fact that security and managed access control are typically provided by the same security firm will be seen as a benefit by property managers.

While property management firms have staff dedicated to providing most building and tenant services, security and access control is seen as being apart from the routine tasks of accounting, maintenance, and general tenant services. Monitoring and maintaining facility security requires skills that property managers will be eager to turn over to professionals.

By relying on a managed access control provider, the property manager:

- Frees their staff to focus on tenant services or sales activities
- Doesn't need to train someone to manage the access system
- Has instant, around-the-clock response to requests to add, change or cancel access privileges, or to remotely unlock doors for authorized individuals
- Gains peace of mind, knowing that their access control system is being managed and maintained by trained security professionals
- Can provide tenants with access cards or badges customized to their facility
- Is able to offer access control to tenants at geographically dispersed sites as easily as a single building
- Has a high level of security for their tenant data because it's hosted in a secure facility
- Receives customized reports of each access event, customized to their needs and delivered on their schedule
- Has automatic backups of their tenant access control information database

Where are the Opportunities?

Markets
Property management companies exist in almost every community of any size. Wherever there are apartments or condominiums, multi-store shopping centers or professional buildings, there are property managers.

Almost every property management company is responsible for the security of the buildings they manage, and are specifically responsible for controlling access. This creates an excellent opportunity for the sale of electronic access control systems and managed access control services.

New System vs Upgrade System
In the markets reviewed, efforts to sell managed access control were much more successful when sold as part of a total hardware and service package. For prospects that have existing systems in place, they already have the procedures and/or staff to self-manage their system. Since they are accustomed to these management responsibilities, they aren't interested in the added expense of upgrading their technology in order to pay an outside firm to manage their system for them.

Some opportunities do exist with customers ready to upgrade or replace their existing access systems. These systems have reached the point in their lifecycle where customers feel the need to upgrade or replace them entirely. This opens the door to discussion of a turnkey hardware and management package.

Prospect Size
Property management firms come in all sizes, from local firms managing a few residential or commercial properties to large national firms that manage properties from coast to coast. Larger firms are more likely to have designated security staff members dedicated to managing security and access. Small to medium firms can't afford to have full-time security staff members, but would welcome the ability to partner with security professionals able to provide around the clock managed access control at an affordable monthly fee.

Integration Not An Issue
Integration of alarm and access control systems isn't widespread. Many customers will have both systems, but they typically are not integrated. However, where customers ARE interested in the reduced administration and potential maintenance issues of a combined system, the ease of integrating the systems will be a selling point.

Property managers will be pleased with the fact that the same service that monitors their alarm system can also manage their access control system. Since they are already relying on a Central Station for monitoring, there's an existing relationship, trust and familiarity that you may be able to capitalize on. This arrangement also provides for a consolidation of billing and administration for the customer, an added selling point.

Sell the Security Continuum
Opportunities exist to sell prospects on managed access control regardless of what burglary and/or access systems they currently have in place.

Initial System Sale
For customers that currently have no electronic protection in place, an additional sales point for a burglary system might be the fact that, for a small additional investment, the customer can also realize all the benefits of access control. This more-bang-for-your-buck strategy can increase the perceived value for the customer's investment, moving you toward a successful sale.

For these new system buyers, it should be simple to demonstrate the many benefits of relying on a single, professionally managed security firm to monitor their alarms and manage their access control.

Access Control
Access control can be sold as an add-on to a new or existing burglary system, or as a separate, standalone system. There is a relatively small, incremental cost to enhance an existing burglary system to realize the additional benefits delivered by access control in a single, integrated system. Customers that are interested in an integrated system maximize the return on their investment in the burglary system by dual-purposing elements of the system for access control.

However, market experience has shown that, despite the many benefits of integrated systems, most customers maintain separate systems. For customers interested in maintaining dual systems, you have a strong, standalone system that you can offer.

Whether as part of a burglary system or as a freestanding system, every access control system provides:

- Code-free arming with electronic credentials, including prox cards, fobs, or Prox Patches
- Logs documenting each access event, recording who went where and when
- Completely customizable interior and exterior door schedules
- Keyless system, eliminating the need to rekey doors
- One credential that can prove privileges at multiple locations
- Credentials that can't be duplicated like keys can

Offer A Managed Solution
Don't sell security without offering access control. And don't offer access control without offering it as a managed solution.

Regardless of which path the customer takes to arrive at their access control solution, they should also be informed of the benefits provided by the no-hassle strategy of using third-party security professionals to manage their system. Don't hesitate to point out your ability to provide a total package that meets all of their security needs.

This comprehensive security approach meets the primary security needs required of any business, while adding the benefits of better managing access to their facilities using a turnkey, outsourced solution.

Pricing
Market experience has shown that the cost to install and manage a system is typically in line with customer expectations, and below the cost of installing a comparable proprietary system. Customers perceive the value delivered to be equivalent to the price. The barrier to sales is, therefore, less on price and more on adequately presenting the value proposition.

Pricing for managed access control is typically based on a formula or matrix that considers the number of doors, the number of users, and the volume of database changes (privilege and schedule updates). Some customers prefer that the monthly fees be rolled up as part of a single purchase price to have a one-time, up-front expense rather than a monthly fee. This model resembles a traditional access control purchase while providing all the benefits of managed access control.

Qualifying/Analyzing Prospects

When considering the benefits to a property manager provider of a managed access control solution, the following questions will help identify strong prospects.

1. If you currently use physical keys, how often do you have to rekey/change locks due to lost keys or tenants who leave your facility?

> **Analysis:** Locksmith charges can be significant, but are virtually eliminated with a keyless access electronic system.

2. Do you ever have to evict tenants?

> **Analysis:** With electronic access control, the credentials of ex-tenants can be instantly cancelled, with no need to change locks or retrieve keys.

3. How well are the keys to your facility controlled?

> **Analysis:** If there are many copies of important keys in use, that increases the likelihood that they will be lost, stolen or copied, eroding security.

4. How often do you have to assist tenants who are locked out?

> **Analysis:** The ability to instantly, remotely grant access provides time savings to the property manager, and greatly improves service to the tenant.

5. Do you have after-hours services provided at your facility?

> **Analysis:** Cleaning crews and service people present a special security risk. Electronic access control provides an audit trail of when credential holders arrived and departed, and where they went while in the facility. Electronic credentials can't be duplicated like conven tional keys. Privileges can be instantly cancelled when service providers are changed.

6. Would it be helpful to have a record of when tenants and service providers entered and exited your controlled doors?

> **Analysis:** Every access event (door open/close) is logged and can be reported to the customer on a routine basis (e.g. weekly, monthly) or when needed to investigate a specific incident or breach.

7. Are there areas inside your facilitate that require special security or documentation of access?

> **Analysis:** In addition to controlling exterior access, an access control system can incorporate special protection of any interior doors to data closets, storage areas, high-security tenants, or other areas.

8. Do you have multiple locations or facilities?

> **Analysis:** As a network application, it is simple to manage multiple sites regardless of their location.

9. Do your tenants and/or staff members use ID badges?

> **Analysis:** Tenant access control credentials can incorporate employee names and photographs, making a multi-function credential that can be customized with the property owner's logo or other graphics. A single credential will work at multiple facilities, and can't be duplicated like conventional keys.