

Security Services Buyer's Guide

Hiring the Best Security Provider: 10 Key Factors to Consider

When it comes to vetting security companies, there are no “expert consumer advocates” to turn to for advice. As a result, validating a security company’s claims and service falls solely on the security buyer. To simplify this task, the attached **Security Services Buyer’s Guide** will assist you in conducting a thorough investigation of the security companies that you are considering for services. With this guide in hand, you (and your team) will be able evaluate each company on the basis of **10 Key Factors**:

1. Hiring Practices and Human Resources Expertise
2. Professionalism of Security Personnel
3. Employee Development and Training
4. Certifications and Memberships
5. Operations and Support Team
6. Value-Added Options
7. Technology and Solutions
8. Stability and Size of Company and Workforce
9. Reputation in the Industry and Community
10. Client Feedback and Customer Service

Who Can Use This Guide: This guide can be used by corporate security, human resources personnel, purchasing directors, property managers, security committee board members, residential board members, safety managers and directors, and independent security consultants. If this guide is used by a team, make photocopies to ensure that all team members have one copy per company being evaluated.

How To Use This Guide: This guide takes you beyond a security provider’s pricing and marketing materials, ensuring that you and your team have the information you to make the best buying decision. In most cases, high expectations for service will not be met by the lowest bidder. This guide will ensure that performance-level expectations are set accordingly. Rather than being swayed by a low bid at the outset, and then being disappointed by poor performance a few weeks into your relationship with a security provider, this guide will help you work with your team to determine your needs and standards before meeting the first bidder.

How to Score Potential Providers: If this decision is being made by a team or committee, this guide will ensure that all issues are addressed and that all team members are using consistent criteria. You may use this guide in its entirety or by selecting the categories in order of importance to your organization. The guide uses a point-value system ranging from 0-5 depending on the importance of each category. A score of 5 will indicate the best score. As a result, the highest scoring company will meet the bulk of your needs. You can even score each category/factor individually.

Company Contact and Office Visits

Security Company Being Evaluated _____
 Phone number _____
 Primary Contact Name _____
 Contact's Title _____
 Date of Visit to Company Office _____
 Address of Office _____
 Arrival Time/Departure Time _____

Visits to Security Company's Clients

Client 1 Company Name _____
 Contact Details _____
 Date of Visit _____

Client 2 Company Name _____
 Contact Details _____
 Date of Visit _____

Client 3 Company Name _____
 Contact Details _____
 Date of Visit _____

Client 4 Company Name _____
 Contact Details _____
 Date of Visit _____

Inspection Team Members

NAME	TITLE/POSITION
NAME	TITLE/POSITION
NAME	TITLE/POSITION
NAME	TITLE/POSITION
NAME	TITLE/POSITION
NAME	TITLE/POSITION

Hiring Practices and Human Resources Expertise <i>This is important because screening and recruiting practices determine the caliber of security personnel assigned to your site.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Does the company have their own background investigation process? What is the extent and quality of the background investigation and screening process?							
Does the company have a Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace Program? What is the company's policy regarding employees' alcohol and drug use? Does the program include Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing?							
Does the company use an outside lab for drug screening of all personnel?							
Does the company have safeguards in place to ensure proscribed pay rates are adhered to and full backgrounds are successfully completed prior to assignment at your site?							
Does the company recruit consistently from the military? What type of military recruiting program is in place? Ascertain specifics, if such a program exists.							
Have the company's military recruiting efforts received recognition such as Top 50 Military-Friendly Employer® or Most Valuable Employer for Military™?							
Seek proof of the company's vacation and benefit package and all that it entails. What percentage of the health insurance premium is paid by the company? Is this acceptable?							
Are other voluntary benefit plans available to the security personnel? What types of plans are offered at no cost to the employee? (i.e. Employee Assistance Programs, discount programs, short or long term disability)							
Does the company offer employees a retirement saving plan like a 401(k)?							
Professionalism of Security Personnel <i>This is important because the image of your organization will be affected by the security personnel that are assigned to your site.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
During on-site visits to company's client sites: Do the security personnel present a professional appearance and demeanor? Do they greet you? Are duties being performed efficiently?							
During on-site visits to company's client sites: Is the security officer's work area neat and orderly?							
Require the company to bring in at least 5 to 10 working security officers from various job sites to be interviewed by your team. Ask any questions that you feel are appropriate. During your interview with security personnel,							

do you have a good impression? Ask them about employee development and training opportunities (see below).							
Does the company have high expectations and standards for its security personnel?							
Employee Development and Training <i>This is important because employees who are highly training and fully engaged make ideal security officers.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Does the company have a professional training center with full time instructors? Is there a research element, such as a corporate library? Do employees have access to an extensive training library?							
Do security officers have access to additional training courses (at no cost) via an online learning management system (LMS)?							
Does the company provide continuing education to security officers?							
Do any of the training courses qualify for continuing education units (CEUs)? Does the American Counsel on Education recommend full college credit for any courses?							
Does the company have a relationship with a college or university, allowing security personnel to pursue a college degree or complete a professional certificate?							
Have the company's training programs been recognized by any industry publications, such as American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) or Training Magazine's Top 125?							
Is the company's training division ISO 9001-2008 registered?							
Has the company invited you to make unannounced visits to training classes and to speak to students? Have you examined training materials? What is your evaluation of the learning atmosphere (i.e. classroom training, etc.)?							
During your on-site assessment: What is your impression of training at post level and classroom?							
Does the company have a professional development program? Does it support certifications for Certified Protection Professional (CPP) and Physical Security Professional (PSP)?							
Does the company practice succession planning and upward mobility for security officers throughout the organization, into supervision, middle management and senior management positions? Ask them to provide at least 12 examples.							
(If your site requires armed security personnel...) Regarding firearms, what programs are in effect, beyond state requirements to enhance judgment and safety training?							

Does the company have an employee recognition program in place to recognize outstanding performance, years of service, training complete and heroic deeds? Ask to see samples.							
Certifications And Memberships <i>This is important because the company you trust to secure your site should be exceptional.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Has the company receive designation and certification by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under the SAFETY Act?							
Is the company a leader in the industry? Community? Ask them for examples of leadership.							
Are any of the company's operations ISO registered?							
Has the company ever been certified regarding safety requirements by a client or using unit?							
Operations and Support Team <i>This is important because there must be a strong support team behind your security officers working to ensure that your needs are met and service levels are maintained.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Does the company support its security personnel with its own 24-hour communications center to support all after-hours activity?							
Does the company have radio system/communication capabilities that meets your needs and required level of service?							
Does the company provide a formal transition plan? Request files of past start-ups and review the quality of the documents. Ask other clients about their transition experience.							
What is your impression of local office management and staff? Inquire about their professional backgrounds, job duties, and length of employment. Ask any questions that you feel are appropriate.							
Will the company provide an ample supply of uniforms, weapons and other equipment at no charge to the officer, as well as replacement of damaged uniforms when necessary?							
What is the company's practice regarding outside supervisor visits, including office management visits? Determine the frequency and review related documentation.							
During national disasters like hurricanes, landslides, earthquakes, fires, etc., what are the company's capabilities in dealing with these circumstances? How are they provided and at what cost?							
How many support offices are in the immediate area of your site? Is this adequate?							

Does the company have a recognized Advanced Life Support (ALS) program certified by any state and county? Determine where it is in place now.							
Ask to review copies of post orders (i.e. operational orders) from existing clients. Do they describe in-depth instructions and duties for the site? Do they meet your expectations for attention to detail?							
Will the company produce the personnel files containing the background and training information on security officers assigned to your site? Ask what the procedure entails.							
Will the company remove a security officer from the site requested by you? Ask what the procedure entails.							
Value-Added Options <i>This is important because a security provider must be able to provide innovative solutions to your organization's unique needs.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
(If you require a canine program for your operation...) What is the company's philosophy regarding a professional canine program? What levels of training are involved in the program?							
Do security personnel have access to basic CPR and first aid courses? Does the company provide CPR and first aid courses with instructor-led training and student certification?							
Does the company offer a higher level of service than just basic guard service? What differentiates that program from standard guard service? Is the program recognized or certified by the state? Does this program carry a U.S. trademark?							
What special qualifications are required to enter the specialized program? How does the program differentiate itself from all others? Ask the company to list a minimum of 10 clients where the program is in place now.							
Technology and Solutions Available <i>This is important because advances in security can enhance your organization's level of security.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Does the company have the ability to provide other integral services and solutions when needed? This may include investigations, undercover, employee hotlines, loss prevention surveys, engineering services, consulting services and risk assessment services.							
Determine the company's experience utilizing technology in conjunction with security officers. This may include solutions like remote access control, visitor control systems, mobile incident reporting via a hand-held PDA, the ability to track real-time incidents and location of security officer.							
Does the company have the ability to provide security surveys and technology installation?							

What innovations, if any, has the company provided to enhance their clients' security posture? Ask for specific examples.							
Stability and Size of Company and Workforce <i>This is important because the company you chose must be able to hire, train, and sustain your security workforce at all times, in all economic conditions.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
How encompassing is the liability coverage provided by the company? Does the company provide a hold-harmless agreement to the client? Is the amount of coverage provided adequate for your organization's needs?							
How long has the company been providing security services?							
Determine the number of operating offices throughout country.							
What is the financial stability of the proposing company? What is the total revenue in the U.S.? What is the company's total global revenue?							
Reputation in the Industry and Community <i>This is important because the security company you hire to protect your organization must have a solid reputation.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Ask the company or make some phone calls to determine the company's relationship with local law enforcement. Is the feedback good?							
Request that the company provide a state regulatory contact for you to inquire about licenses, complaints and violations. Can copies of the applicable licenses be provided?							
Ask the company if they have any corporate responsibility programs in order to give back to their local communities? What green initiatives do they have in place?							
Does the company have a working relationship with various minority subcontractors to be utilized when required by bid specs? Ask for proof.							
What is the company's experience in your industry? Are they familiar with the needs of a business or organization like yours?							
Client Feedback and Customer Service <i>This is important because the best way to judge a security company to meet and interview the company's customers.</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Will the company solicit your feedback? By sending questionnaires from its national headquarters? How often?							
If you are dissatisfied or an unfavorable occurrence happens, how will it be addressed? What actions will be taken?							
Has this company ever published proprietary operational information about a client without permission? (i.e. newspapers, TV or online)							

<p>Ask other clients about the company's performance over an extended period of time.</p>							
<p>Ask to see letters of commendation received throughout the years from clients and the public.</p>							
<p>Ask the company about client cancellations. Ask for specific reasons. Judge the authenticity of the company's explanations.</p>							

The guide uses a point-value system ranging from 0-5 depending on the importance of each category. A score of 5 will indicate the best score on each question. As a result, the highest scoring company will meet the bulk of your needs. You can even score each category/factor individually.

Category	Score	Potential
Hiring Practices and Human Resources Expertise		50
Professionalism of Security Personnel		20
Employee Development and Training		65
Certifications and Memberships		20
Operations and Support Team		60
Value-Added Options		20
Technology and Solutions		20
Stability and Size of Company and Workforce		20
Reputation in the Industry and Community		20
Client Feedback and Customer Service		30
THIS COMPANY'S OVERALL SCORE →		325

Before you turn over the keys... You have completed the scored portion of the evaluation. At this point, you have met the provider's management, clients, and security officers. You've asked questions and received responses. Now take a moment to concentrate on your overall impression of the experience that you've had with this company. Was the provider responsive? reliable? professional? Based on your impressions so far, do you feel that this company has the right resources and personnel to meet your security needs? What does your gut tell you?
