



A Pocket Guide to Crime Prevention Through Customer Service

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Overview



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The customer experience is critical to every retail shopping centre environment. Creating an environment that is welcoming is synonymous with feeling safe and secure. Security services that contribute to a positive customer journey are instrumental in ensuring you keep customers coming back.

Few departments have more frontline customer contact than the security department. Security officers are often the first point of contact that property employees or customers see. They are approached dozens of times a day by people seeking information, leaving numerous opportunities to engage in positive and meaningful customer interactions.

Two approaches to customer service are:

- Reactive (e.g., customers seek out or approach the security officer for assistance)
- Proactive (e.g., security officers actively seek out opportunities to provide assistance).

A good security program should include both types of customer service.

Three Ways to Prevent Crime

When it comes to a positive customer experience, the value of a customer service-centric security program is unquestionable. But customer service can extend beyond that. Can your security provider harness customer service to prevent crime?

Here are the three ways every security program should use customer service to prevent crime in commercial and office spaces:

1.  **Visibility**
2.  **Deterrence**
3.  **Perception**



Visibility

A security program rooted in a culture of customer service will encourage security officers to proactively seek out opportunities to provide assistance. Below is an example of how your security team can do so:

- Approach people at directories to offer help with navigating the facility
- Recognize body language that indicates if a person is lost or unsure of where they are going and offering directions
- Acknowledge and greet customers as they walk by with a smile, nod, or verbal greeting, such as “good morning/afternoon”.

The result of the above actions is a highly visible security team that is actively engaging with people and making themselves seen in the environment. Ninety-five percent of would-be criminals are deterred from carrying out a crime by the presence of a security officer. A proactive customer service program creates a welcoming environment for customers while simultaneously creating a less appealing environment for would-be criminals. [Studies](#) have shown that the mere presence of a proactive security officer decreases criminal acts against people by 30%.

95%

of would-be criminals are deterred by the presence of a security officer

30%

decrease in criminal acts against people with the presence of a proactive security officer



Deterring Unwanted Activity

A customer service-centric security program has security officers actively engaging with everyone on the property. While this obviously includes customers, it will also include would-be criminals who would prefer to remain anonymous and unnoticed. If, while casing a potential target, a would-be criminal is approached by security and greeted with, “Hi, it looks like you are looking for something, can I help you find it?”, that would-be criminal will feel as though they have been compromised and seek another target elsewhere.

Through proactive engagement, we have effectively prevented a crime before it occurs.



Perception of Safety

Modern media, both mainstream and social, delivers information faster than ever before. Media focuses on topics or events that catch viewers' attention to increase engagement with their content. As a result, we are inundated with stories of crime, robbery, assault, “stranger attacks”, etc. which create a perception that we are unsafe. In fact, a study from [Mention](#) indicated that social media has become considerably more negative in the past five years.

Large commercial spaces (such as shopping centres) are scaled-down representations of the communities they serve. As a result, they often will have some – usually a small – degree of criminality. Shoplifting, loitering, graffiti, etc. are all examples of typical crime in commercial and retail spaces. However, these crimes can be perceived differently if they are captured and amplified by media, making patrons and customers feel unsafe, or worse, attracting more criminal activities.

This perception and fear can be combatted through a strong customer service program that encourages high visibility and engagement. In addition to discouraging criminal and antisocial behaviour, a highly visible and engaged security team promotes a perception of safety and quells fear. Safe properties attract more visitors and encourage them to stay in spaces longer and more frequently. In turn, this reinforces the perception of safety even further.

Conclusion

While many components contribute to a comprehensive security program, they all include both reactive and proactive approaches to customer service. A customer service-centric security program will create welcoming environments, promote feelings of safety and security, discourage criminal and antisocial behaviours, and keep customers coming back to your property.

Communicating these values with your security team is essential in developing a culture of customer service and safety on your site.