by Steven Turney

Securing the Campus of Tomorrow

With National Safety Month behind us, it's essential that we keep talking about campus security. Today, it remains critically important that educational leaders team up and work together to implement comprehensive and practical approaches to keep students, faculty, and staff safe and secure.

Proactive in Common-Sense Measures

Universities must not just be reactive, but proactive in implementing common-sense measures that ensure the security of everyone on campus. When students feel comfortable and safe, it is easier for them to learn and perform, and that's where security practitioners make the difference.

Universities should already have policies in place regarding processes for first responders, implementation of emergency drills and even local cooperative agreements to keep children safe.

Creating a secure environment in schools is an ongoing issue that has to start with people, then move to effective processes that will be strengthened by technology. While access control, alarm and surveillance systems can monitor, detect, delay and deter, campus safety officials must implement methods of communication during any given emergency situation.

Cross-Campus Communication

Effective methods of communicating to students, staff and first responders are crucial, and communication must be fast and precise. In order to do this, utilizing technologies and devices that we have in our possession at all times will be the most efficient and discrete.

Email and SMS are effective methods of sending alerts to the masses and should be used to augment traditional solutions such as sirens and bells. This helps to ensure that those on the property are informed as well as those that could potentially be in transit to the campus.

More than 98 percent of adults in the United States have access to a mobile device that can receive SMS messages, and even more importantly, most SMS messages are opened within 90 seconds of receipt. Texting is often a better way of ensuring that important messages are received because it is possible to send tens of thousands of messages in a second and the transmission is not dependent upon a single server.

Cloud-based Security

University campuses don't have just one building to secure, but instead have to monitor multiple buildings and even multiple buildings across several campuses. This makes executing effective security and communication strategies even more difficult because the operators of technologies are likely remote from where the situation has occurred.

Tying this back to a single integrated platform becomes even more beneficial as operators are able to see, monitor, control and most importantly communicate in real time. In today's world, many universities are opting to do this through cloud-based solutions, a logical step considering the efficiency and effectiveness of the cloud.

Though historical versions of these systems typically had some of the capabilities of the integrated solutions available today, they had a higher burden of support and networking complexities. These are mitigated in today's cloud-based solutions.

Many institutions are even implementing mobile credentials, which amplify the benefits of using SMS and text alerts as an effective means of communication.

During any emergency situation, alerts must be instant and as accurate as possible. Incorporating pre-built message templates for operators to use helps to ensure the information communicated is accurate; however, having the flexibility to send customized messages is important, especially when communicating updates to first responders who are likely in the field assessing a situation.

In a recent study we conducted, over half of respondents (55 percent) from the education sector stated that they

> Creating a secure environment in schools is an ongoing issue that has to start with people, then move to effective processes that will be strengthened by technology. While access control, alarm and surveillance systems can monitor, detect, delay and deter, campus safety officials must implement methods of communication during any given emergency situation.

are likely to consider transitioning their security operations to the cloud, and another nine percent expressed that they are very likely to do so. The key drivers for these perspectives are based upon the simplicity of deploying them as well as the overwhelming cost savings that the institution will benefit from.

Precise Access Control

Educational leaders are tasked with securing facilities which by nature must also be as open as possible. Traditional security management systems can provide the flexibility to assign access rights by location, time of day and even adjust based upon events.

The evolution of traditional security management systems involves incorporating mass messaging technologies, visitor management and even augmenting security teams by sharing information with building management operations.

However, the building itself isn't the only thing that must be secured. The information being transmitted, and the alerts being made must have a safeguard themselves, as the access control system in place needs to meet stringent security requirements and government regulations.

Utilizing authentication and encryption to protect messaging between mobile devices, controllers and workstations ensures that all data sent about a school and its occupants is protected.

The Future of Campus Safety

The study we recently conducted on the use of cloud-based security systems also found that a majority (52 percent) of respondents in the education sector indicated that their security systems need some improvement, with 17 percent indicating that their systems require major improvements.

This suggests that there is a major opportunity for security managers and educational institution leaders to grow their outlook and explore the new technologies available for securing their facilities.

We must always be cognizant of the limited budget most educational facilities have. However, the capabilities of today's devices, including integration with other university systems, wireless and cloud capabilities, often allow for cost savings on multiple fronts. If the right security system is used, with an easy-to-understand interface, personnel training costs are reduced.

Costs can also be minimized by using a cloud service that excludes the need for upfront investment in proprietary hardware, software or servers. Through making use of the latest technology, educational institutions can ensure that they are working within their budgets while ensuring that their students are kept safe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Steven Turney has been with Schneider Electric's security line of business for over 17 years and is responsible for developing security strategies within Schneider Electric's North American Buildings business. Steven's expertise includes developing security solutions that mitigate risks and building a successful sales organization. He can be reached at steven.turney@schneider-electric.com.

Transform Your Tech

With One-of-a-Kind Dispensing Kiosks

Technology Access Has Never Been So Easy.

Specialized "One-to-Many" Automated Dispensing Stations are Modular and are Integrated to Your ILS and/or Local LDAP/Active Directory. Additionally, Web Camera, Battery Monitoring, Automated Charging and Smart Wipes, Email Notifications, Foreign Language Capability and a Full Suite of Inventory Management, Audit Trail and Management Reporting Functionality Make the LaptopsAnytime System a One-of-a-Kind for any facility.

Choice of Apple, Dell, HP, Lenovo or Google devices. Laptops, Tablets or both!

2,000,000

OVER 2 + MILLION ANNUAL CHECKOUTS

LAPTOPS ANYTIME™

Contact Us Today
laptopsanytime.com
877.836.3727

SECURE SELF-SERVICE ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL TECHNOLOGY