

Broadview's FALSE ALARM Vigilance

Broadview Security is going out with a bang. On the verge of being absorbed into ADT, the company has received the 5th annual Police Dispatch Quality (PDQ) Award for its outstanding false alarm management program. See what makes the plan so strong.



BY SCOTT GOLDFINE

There were many compelling reasons Tyco decided earlier this year to acquire and fold Broadview Security into its ADT Security Services business. Foremost was the sterling reputation Broadview had established as a keenly well managed national provider of security systems and monitoring services. Presently, even as its operations were being integrated into ADT's as this went to press, that quality has helped Broadview achieve perhaps its final hurrah under that brand name — capturing the 5th annual Police Dispatch Quality (PDQ) Award.

“Our mission statement, ‘Creating Customers for Life,’ drives every initiative at Broadview. By providing an outstanding customer service experience and ensuring that customers know how to properly operate the security system, we ensure the customer has a positive experience,” says Carole Vanyo, ex-Broadview senior vice president customer operations and new vice president, customer experience for ADT. “We also know that continuing to build and expand our strong agency

and industry relationships is an integral part of our mission.”

Vanyo highlights two of the overriding tenets of the PDQ program: educating customers about false alarm issues and training them on proper system use, and working closely with responding law enforcement agencies to minimize unnecessary dispatches. But it does not end there as alarm management practices proven to be successful that pertain to salesperson and technician training, monitoring procedures, and equipment configuration are also key.

Established in 2005 by the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC), False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) and *SECURITY SALES & INTEGRATION (SSI)*, the PDQ program aims to raise industry-wide awareness, motivate alarm companies to be proactive and provide workable models for others. The PDQ Award annually recognizes the security company that best demonstrates an enthusiastic, cooperative and successful effort in alarm reduction strategies. This year marked the first time the PDQ presentation took place at ESX rather than during SSI's SAMMY Awards at ISC West.

PDQ applications are scored by three independent judges in 15 different areas. In its winning application, Broadview noted a police dispatch rate for 2009 of .40 (down from .44 in 2008) in the Fort Worth, Texas, region that also includes the firm's Irving-based headquarters. The figure is derived by dividing the provider's total false alarm dispatches (in this case 2,618 excluding cancellations) by the total alarm sites maintained by the provider in that jurisdiction (in this case, 6,546).

While Broadview's submission was regional, it has set a high standard for effective alarm management nationwide. In fact, the company has become the first two-time winner of the PDQ Award, also capturing the 2006 honor when it was known as Brink's Home Security. Let's take a closer look at what to this point is the industry's most comprehensive and successful approach to alarm management and false dispatch reduction.

KEEPING CUSTOMERS IN CONTROL

False alarms originate in customer locations where neither a security professional nor police are typically present. This makes it critical that those custom-



Being conscientious and implementing a host of proven best practices, both in its monitoring and customer service centers as well as among its skilled force of field personnel, has served Broadview Security well.

ers grasp the proper operation of their system, local permitting requirements and ordinances, what to expect in the event of an alarm, how to handle a false alarm, and the need to minimize unwarranted response by the authorities.

Among the ways this is accomplished before and during a sale: advertising, sales literature and contract must give a realistic expectation of the response that will be made when an alarm occurs; salespeople must explain, prior to installation, local requirements for

permits, permit fees and fines for false alarms, if applicable, and assist the customer in obtaining a required permit; and documentation should be provided to the customer that explains the false dispatch issue and tips to reduce the risk of a false dispatch.

Once the sale is made, installers or other employees must instruct new customers about: proper use of the system; if a seven-day test period is used, describe how the alarms will be handled; how to select an arm/disarm code and an identity code; how to determine appropriate entry and exit delay periods; how to prevent false alarms that could occur with the system just installed; how to cancel an alarm or request for dispatch; how to contact the installing or monitoring company for assistance; how to obtain service when the alarm system malfunctions; how an answering machine or “call waiting” may affect alarm verification and cancellation procedures; and how DSL, VoIP or other services may impact the alarm system.

The provider should also instruct the customer on the steps in the verification process and assist in selecting appropriate call list telephone numbers. Encouraging customers to provide local numbers for all contacts is preferred, with an emphasis on the use of cellular numbers as the second premises number. It’s advisable to deploy an active program in the monitoring station to identify and correct outdated contact information. Ongoing communication, such as newsletters and bill inserts, after the sale is crucial in maintaining the customer relationship and awareness of false alarm prevention.

Of course, all of this requires a commitment of time, resources and money. But as Vanyo explains, the payoff is well worth the investment.

“By investing a considerably small amount in producing customer collateral, the benefits outweigh the expenditures,” she says. “The key is to do so across all customer touch points — product development, sales, installation, service, monitoring, care, Web sites, E-mails, statement mailers. They are low-cost avenues that provide huge

results. At the end of the day, having customers who know exactly what to do in the event of a false alarm is something you almost can’t put a price tag on.”

TECHNOLOGY’S IMPORTANT ROLE

The type of equipment, its configuration and installation also play a major role in the incidence of false alarms. Alarm companies are urged to install products that meet the requirements of the SIA CP-01 standard, with all programmable options set to default settings. The devices should also meet all applicable UL standards.

“We have actually had about 90 percent of what is required in CP-01 built into our systems since 1993, long before today’s standard was written and adopted by the industry,” says Vanyo. “Since late 2003, every new panel we install has been CP-01 compliant. We have an actual cancel button on our keypad — different from a cancel feature, which requires a customer to enter a series of numbers.”

To help ensure problem-free installations, technicians ought to be certified as meeting the requirements of National Training School (NTS) Level I or II, or equivalent (such as a documented company training program that is similar in content and duration), as well as meet any state or jurisdictional continuing education requirements. Broadview employs one of the industry’s most thorough technical training regimens. In addition to NTS, technicians must be certified in Fire Alarm Installation Methods (FAIM); go through a 12-week in-house course that includes classroom, in-the-field and online studies; and complete a system service certification that shows they have troubleshooting and resolution skills.

“Our internal Certified Trainer Program has been the single-most successful tool for our technicians. That, coupled with other field training components, rounds out the 12-week program technicians are required to complete before being on their own in the field. We have advanced ongoing training that includes components of the NTS training program,” says Vanyo. →



Broadview Security's Rob Washington (right) accepts the PDQ Award from (l-r) SIAC's Stan Martin, Honeywell's Gordon Hope and SSI's Scott Goldfine at a ceremony held during ESX in Pittsburgh. The program is organized by SSI, SIAC and FARA; Honeywell is a sponsor.

MINDFUL MONITORING

Whether it's the primary provider's own or that of a third party, the way in which the central monitoring center handles an incoming alarm signal is another paramount facet in averting false dispatches. As is the case with the installation/service piece of the puzzle, it is essential monitoring operators are well trained via course such as those offered by the Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA).

An intrusion alarm monitoring practice that always made sense, but never more so than in the golden age of mobile communication devices, is *enhanced call verification* (ECV), or calling at least two phone numbers prior to dispatch. Broadview has offered this service since 1989, making it mandatory for commercial accounts in 1993 and residential in 2003. Increasingly, jurisdictions are legislating or strongly recommending ECV.

Another practice that is all too often neglected is contacting customers after each and every false alarm occurrence to review the event and determine the cause. This helps keep them as isolated incidents and prevents them from progressing into chronic problems. Addressing each false alarm on a case-by-case basis is also vital from a customer experience/perception point of view.

"We have seen great feedback from both customers and employees who

engage with customers with elevated activity. While we are servicing the account, via customer care or through field operations, we take the time to answer any system-operation questions the customer has, and ensure that performance metrics and quality measurements include false alarm reduction aspects," says Vanyo.

In particular, monitoring providers need to track the worst false alarm abusers each month and take the necessary corrective action, up to and including terminating the account. However, implementing a program as extensive as Broadview's makes that scenario unlikely as customers and employees alike work in unison toward the best solutions.

"We have built the program into the fabric of the organization. From our 'false alarm savvy' online quiz to effortless contact updates, we constantly reach out to customers across all spectrums of activity," says Vanyo. "We leverage customer profiles with low activity, while directly contacting those with elevated alarms. We have especially targeted the issues that naturally arise from multiple users."

PARTNERING WITH POLICE

The final element in the alarm response chain is the one with the onus to arrive on the scene when an emergency or crime event occurs to ensure

public safety — the police. These agencies also stand the most to lose if overburdened with false alarms, and their lack of response can devalue alarm systems themselves. Thus the importance for a strong relationship to exist among alarm companies and law enforcement cannot be overstated.

That's why the support of a police department with a letter confirming the alarm rate and acceptability of the applicant is required to qualify for consideration in the PDQ program. Broadview understands and fully embraces the need to nurture this dynamic. In particular, Fort Worth's ordinance requirement that all alarm systems be permitted in order to receive police response has resulted in a collaborative partnership where both parties benefit. Together, they help each other keep track to make sure alarm system owners' permits remain current.

"Through the years, Broadview Security and the Fort Worth Alarm Unit have established a good working relationship," says Kathleen Schraufnagel, Broadview industry and government relation liaison. "The success we have enjoyed in continued compliance with the ordinance as well as reductions in false alarms is directly related to the ongoing communication between both parties."

Broadview went so far as to create a permit department within its corporate office to make sure there are no hitches for either responding agencies or customers.

"It really comes down to a willingness to listen to law enforcement concerns and truly communicate with them on solutions and ideas," says Vanyo. "Ultimately, we are all concerned about the citizen/customer as well as the realities of managing alarms." ■

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