

Suggestions for Hiring a Security Consultant For your House of Worship

By

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Preventing Victimization of Houses of Worship

Houses of worship have been victimized globally with active shooters, hostage situations, bomb detonations, sexual abuse, kidnapping and more. How do you prepare to prevent these events from happening at your facility? We must begin to take security “seriously” and implement policies, procedures and actions to keep those who worship with us safe from harm.

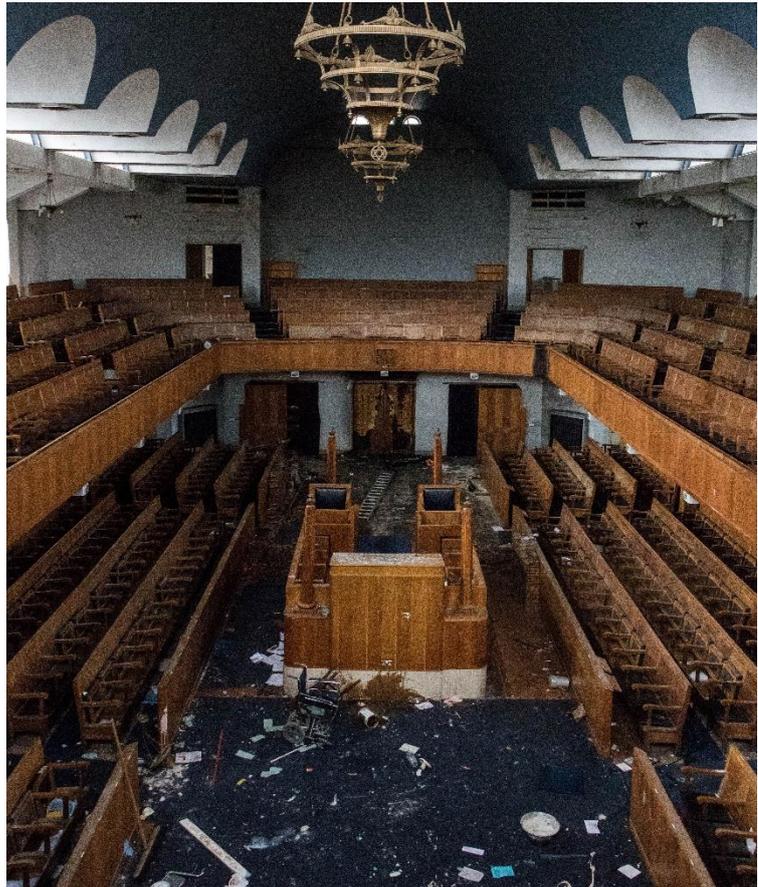
First Step

Begin with an honest conversation with the leadership and members at your facility about the need for security and make an initial financial contribution as you decide on the path you wish to proceed. You may elect to identify a leader that will lead this process and conduct a risk assessment or you may wish to hire a security consultant who will conduct the assessment, provide leadership and recommendations to direct your quest for a crime-free worship environment

Risk Assessment

The ASIS International (ASIS) the world’s largest security organization has published a Risk Assessment for Houses of Worship that is available for free at www.crimepreventionforhousesofworship.com. This assessment can be completed by someone with adequate security knowledge. It will identify vulnerabilities which you can prioritize as to which ones are most appropriate and most pressing to implement. Every house of worship is different in design, function, size, services and mission, and therefore; it is challenging to make recommendations that apply to all, as we must consider the culture and the limitations of what each congregation is willing to implement and how much risk each is willing to accept.

Often congregations have professionals knowledgeable in law enforcement and security issues. Regardless, your local police department may be able to assist with the risk assessment. If not, there are qualified Security Consultants that can make this a seamless process.



Security Consultants

Security consultants are available to assess various organizations including hospitals, schools, businesses, retail establishments, airports, housing projects, houses of worship, cities and municipalities, and much more. Private security professionals are trained to direct the development and implementation of small and large scale projects.

Selecting a Security Consultant

A quick online search can provide a long list of potential security consultants. It is advisable to contact other houses of worship in your area and in your organization for referrals and to verify credentials regardless of referrals. If you cannot find a security consultant that falls within your price considerations, some may provide free and/or reduced charges, and some may only charge for travel expenses.

Considerations when Selecting a Security Consultant

1. **Consider the length of experience in private security, consulting and conducting security risk assessments.** How long has the consultant worked as a private security consultant? Length of time is just one of many considerations and number of years does not necessarily equate to knowledge. Military and law enforcement experience may qualify as a skillset if experience included crime prevention, protection of assets and facilities. How many risk assessments have they completed?
2. Consider **references on completed projects.** Ask for samples of procedures and recommendations from previous clients. Verify references of prior and current clients and peers who have worked with the consultant who can attest to their knowledge, skills and abilities.
3. Consider **education, certifications and credentials.**
College degrees and credentials should all be considered. ASIS International offers three Board Certifications in security which are accredited by the Department of Homeland Security, The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and The International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
 - a. **Certified Protection Professional (CPP®)** – The CPP® designation is the certification for individuals who have demonstrated competency in all areas constituting security management and is the highest designation for a security practitioner.
 - b. **Physical Security Professional (PSP®)** – The PSP® designation is the certification for those whose primary responsibility is to conduct threat surveys, design integrated security systems that include equipment, procedures and people, or install, operate and maintain those systems.
 - c. **Professional Certified Investigator (PCI®)** – The PCI® designation is the certification of demonstrated education and/or experience in the fields of case management, evidence collection, and case presentation.

Note: There are many board certifications and credentials which are not accredited by a credible organization.

4. Consider **availability** and the projected timeline for completion.

5. Consider the **cost** of each component. Does the consultant charge an hourly rate or a completed component? How does the consultant charge on each component?
 - Completing the Risk Assessment of each building.
 - Providing a summary of each building.
 - Coordinating with leadership the results of the risk assessment.
 - Developing a security plan for each building. This can be divided into several sections including exterior security, internal security, protecting people, places, programs, etc.
 - Coordinating with leadership to develop a timeline for implementation.
 - Providing training for members.
 - Follow-up and technical assistance.
 - Updates and reviews
6. Consider the **technical** knowledge of the consultant?



7. **Consider insurance provisions and what the consultant offers.** An adequate Professional E&O Liability Policy should be in place to protect the consultant and consumer.
8. Consider the consultant's **professional memberships.** Professional memberships provide educational programs to keep the security consultant current. One of the most highly recognized organizations for security professionals is ASIS International. Another reputable organization for security professionals involved in the protection of critical infrastructure is InfraGard which is an FBI sponsored organization. However, simply being a member of such organizations does not mean the consultant is well versed in the field of security.
9. Consider the consultant's **publications.** While this credential is not crucial in the selection process, the publications may be reflective of his/her viewpoints.
10. Consider the consultant's **interpersonal skills and knowledge of your religious customs?** Does the consultant possess the interpersonal skills to interact effectively with your members? Do they have a general understanding of your religious beliefs and customs? Ideally, it may prove beneficial to locate a

consultant who is well-credentialed in security and has experience in the house of worship leadership.



This may not be a comprehensive list of every issue to consider when selecting a security consultant; however, it is a list to get you started. It is crucial that you start to develop and implement a security plan. Then you must critique it and revise as needed because threats are always changing. Leaders in places of worship must do everything they can to provide a safe and secure environment.

Authors

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