

Case Study – Bristan Group



When large commercial constructions, such as warehousing, are planned, often the last consideration is the security system. Derek Emslie of CBS Security argues that this is a very flawed approach and would not work for many of the projects they undertake.

The Supplier

CBS differentiate their approach by making fire and security systems integral to the planning process, not simply an adjunct to it. Rather than 'bolting on' a security or fire system, CBS target developers, working with them to ensure that the security and fire systems are integrated from the outset. This means that CBS can be tracking a project through the various stages of its evolution for (sometimes) years. Therefore before a project is actually secured, they have already invested substantially in it.

This approach pays dividends as it often leads them to getting more involved with tenants who may want second fit and subsequent alterations to the system once they actually occupy the building. This builds a better bond between client and supplier, often resulting in access to tertiary markets and other lucrative contracts.

The approach fostered by CBS means that they don't have to undertake direct marketing, but rather rely on word of mouth and quality of service as marketing tools. By way of example, Derek took me to meet one of their clients, Alan Giles, Logistics Manager for the Bristan Group, and gave me the opportunity to review the installation.

The Client

The Bristan Group is a leading distributor of bathroom equipment and fittings. Previously a distributed business, the decision was made to move to centralized distribution for the Group and they constructed a purpose designed warehouse and office complex in Tamworth to house their new Head Quarters.

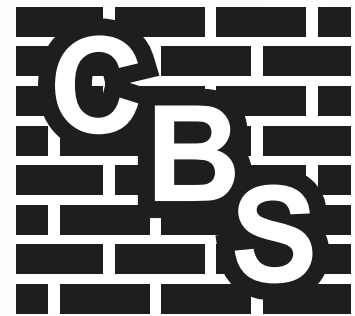
The warehouse is over 240,000 square feet of floor area, with the capacity to store and distribute the complete stock inventory. It also houses a state of the art testing laboratory and impressive showroom.

The building design aimed to provide an efficient and effective distribution centre, which would enable flexible 'picking and packing' operations. The latter was achieved using a complex array of computer controlled conveyor belts, reminiscent of a Heath Robinson creation, which moves and directs individual components from storage, through packing and into distribution.

The Fire and Security Challenge

The challenge was to create a good warehouse solution, with minimum disruption and maximum security, relative to the needs of the business. As the building is largely uncompartimented, fire protection systems were a primary consideration. With centralised storage, the consequential loss from a fire would have had a massive impact on business continuity. In addition to the fire and security protection measures provided by CBS, the building was also sprinklered.





The Solution

As the solutions were agreed in principle at a very early stage of the development, the fire and security measures could be fully integrated from the outset. The solution comprised:

- Air aspirating fire alarm
- Addressable fire alarm
- Fire suppression system
- CCTV
- Intruder alarm
- Access control
- Guarding services

The air aspirating fire alarm was chosen as the primary element of the fire safety system as it provided the required level of protection necessary for maximum flexibility in design and space utilization. It is a highly sensitive system that sucks in the ambient air and checks, using a calibrated laser beam, for particulates. When particulates of a certain size are detected, the alarm is triggered. This system is linked to the conventional addressable fire alarm system which is used in the ancillary areas, such as 'picking and packing'. The IT systems, which manage many of the operations, are controlled by two primary servers and these are protected using additional gas fire suppression systems.

The intruder alarm system is a Grade 3 system Police response system, the minimum CBS provide, linked through an Alarm Receiving Centre; the fire alarm systems being routed the same way. Additionally both systems are connected to the Estate gatehouse, which is manned by CBS personnel.

The CCTV systems mainly cover the building exterior and perimeter. Bristan use their own internal CCTV system in the warehouse area, but the Digital CCTV system is pretty standard, explained Derek, and it is there for all the usual reasons.

Access control, visitor and employee badging is also managed by a system supplied by CBS. As Alan Giles explained, 'Proximity badge control systems help us with the multiple Bristan client base, controlling access to restricted areas for safety and security reasons.'

When touring the warehouse I asked Alan what, if anything, went wrong or didn't work out as anticipated. He confessed to being delighted with the system supplied. He described a recent event when the air aspirating fire alarm was triggered by a smouldering fork lift truck (it had overheated) and activated the system. He felt that this not only demonstrated the sensitivity of the system, but reassured him that all was well.

If integration is critical to the CBS approach, the issue of guarding must also be addressed. As a component element of the range of services provided, CBS employ around 78 guards, again to ensure that clients get the level of service and reliability they need. Derek explained,

'The guarding services provided by us are crucial to our success. If guards are changed and don't know the security systems well, it causes problems for the client and consequently for us. We value engineer our business, with an eye on the long-term perspective; we look for optimum solutions, not cheap solutions or solutions that are over the top, that's what works for us.'

CBS have several large projects in the pipeline and they believe that this is thanks to the approach they have adopted.

For more information visit:

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Author: Andrew Brown
SSAIB