

BASICS OF ESTABLISHING AN EMPLOYEE ID BADGING SYSTEM

A driver's license can't propel a car safely. But when you put a trained, law-abiding driver behind the wheel...there it goes. Think of ID badging the same way; by itself, a photo ID won't secure your building. Add personnel and processes and you have a system which can help protect your product and employees.

Whether you're establishing a badging system from scratch or looking to improve an existing one, here are some basic concepts for you to discuss with your security integrator:

1. Equipment

- *Software.* It isn't necessary to kill a fly with a bazooka, but don't limit your future growth potential by purchasing something that only serves one purpose. Think of your badging software as a game of chess and try to look a few plays ahead before making a move. Would you like the badging system to eventually integrate with your payroll or other system software? What about controlling access to sensitive areas?
- *Camera.* You'll want quality photos on the badges and most software applications are compatible with a variety of cameras. Security cameras have great resolution; but an off-the-shelf digital camera, such as a Canon Powershot, might be an affordable and convenient solution if you want to purchase two or more for initial badge issue, or if you ever need to replace it in a hurry.
- *Printer.* The type of printer you need is based on the card type (which may be dictated by cost or regulations affecting your industry) and design. Consider factors like whether you want a holographic overlay to prevent counterfeit badges, but don't spend the extra money on a double-sided printer if you only want a one-sided card.
- *Consumables.* Remember to include consumables when you budget for your badging system. In addition to the cards themselves, you'll periodically need printer ribbons, cleaning kits for the printer, and clips or lanyards. Consumables aren't a huge expense but they are often not considered until you run out.
- *Card Type.* The type of card technology you need depends on your application and the size of your operation. If you're incorporating visual identification with access control or a payroll system which requires proximity, magnetic stripe or other technology cards, consider disposable adhesive (a.k.a. 'sticky-back') overlays. This way you can reuse your higher cost technology cards and just peel off the overlays when an employee leaves. Employees don't always return cards, but if you can get some of them back, it reduces your overall costs.

2. Badge Design

- *Photo.* Security officers don't need to recognize your logo, so don't make that the biggest part of the design; they need to verify that the person on the badge is the person wearing it. Make the photo prominent (at least 1-inch) and train those taking the portraits. Even a 2-inch picture isn't much good if it's all back-drop.
- *Expiration.* Put an expiration date on the cards, forcing people to update their photo and cardholder info every year or two. An ID badge photo should look like the person wearing it, not like a high school yearbook version of them.

3. Initial Issue

- *People hate change.* Find someone in your organization that's gifted with the art of propaganda and ask them to help make your ID badge roll-out the most exciting thing since fried Twinkies. Announcing the badging initiative in newsletters, paycheck memos, and meetings is a valuable tool. Communicate the badge roll-out to those affected as an improvement with specific details that will benefit them.
- *Plan, plan, plan.* Schedule and assign time slots by department, shift, birthday, anything. Murphy's Law; if you don't tell people when to come take their photo, they will all come at once or not at all!
- *Pictures matter.* Simple details like having all employees seated in front of a Tarheel-blue piece of felt for a backdrop will provide uniformity in the photos, and having them sit at a 45-degree angle with their head turned toward the camera will avoid the Nick Nolte look. If people like their badge photos, they will be more likely to wear them.
- *Badge distribution.* Don't print the cards immediately, just focus on taking photos. Printing them all at the same time at a future date and then distributing by department will limit workday disruption.
- *Provide instructions.* When you issue badges, provide a one-page FAQ sheet which includes things like not covering their photo with a sticker, hanging the badge from their rear-view mirror, or using it as an ice scraper.
- *Replacement cost.* Consider a policy on replacement, not so much to recoup your cost, but as incentive for badge-holders to care for their card. The thought of a \$20 replacement fee can often make someone think twice about leaving a badge somewhere. (In some environments, however, this can hurt morale so act on this one based on your corporate culture.)

4. Continuing Process

Human Resources or the Security Department are the two departments typically tasked with the badging process. There are pros and cons to each.

- *Human Resources.* Some think it's best to have the HR person creating badges, especially if replacement cost is involved. It ensures the step is accomplished as part of the new-hire process and there is some benefit to having a process owner with continuity (think about your turnover rate in HR versus turnover of security guards).
- *Security Department.* Others think that Security should own all related technology and processes. This particularly makes sense if the ID badging is part of an access control system or tied to a parking pass. On the up side, it requires visitors and employees with lost badges to check in with security before entering the building and you certainly don't want visitors and suppliers to have to go to HR first when they're simply there for a one hour meeting. On the down side, if traffic is heavy it could tie up your security person, creating the opportunity for a security breach.
- *Multiple Badging Stations.* Depending on volume and budget, it may make sense in your situation to have two badging stations; one located in the Human Resources area for employees, and one at security for anyone needing a temporary badge.
- *Temporary Cards.* Buy some no-technology plastic (pvc) cards and control them with a numbering system for visitors who don't need photo or access cards. Make a different color for employees who need temporary cards but not replacements. This way you can quickly differentiate between someone who forgot their badge but belongs and someone who may be someplace they shouldn't be.
- Whether you're considering it for access control or simply for visual identification, personnel badging is a necessary part of facility security. Don't expect that this one step will fulfill all of your physical security needs, but do recognize the purpose it serves in your overall integration of technology, people, and processes.



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