

Moving through the gears

By Jonathan Levine

It has been an exciting few months in the development of the business, continuing our strategy of both organic growth and growth through acquisition.



In April we announced our successful merger with Temple Security to create a £26 million business. The business now boasts a national infrastructure comprising two state-of-the-art NACOSS standard control centres in the north and south of the country and a network of eight regional offices from which to deliver our service.

Since the relaunch of Axis Security last year, the company has been looking at strategies to expand the business model from the City to the regions. Clients work with Axis because of the quality of our delivery but we have not previously been able to extend that offering outside of London and the South East because we did not have the infrastructure to cope.

The merger with Temple Security provides not only this network, but also a complementary electronic security business that brings further capability and capacity to the service we can offer to our customers.

Controlled expansion requires a stable platform from which to grow. The merger with Temple gives us this platform, and notably a strong IT and administrative backbone to support our existing infrastructure. Where required, we are also investing significantly in certain key areas, for example, in sales and marketing. This will ensure that our message is communicated in a consistent and clear manner to all internal and external stakeholders of our business.

Yes, Axis Security is expanding, but not at the expense of diluting the quality service that our customers have come to expect. Indeed quite the opposite. The quality and experience of the Temple team, notably Chris Wisely and Kennedy Mackenzie, combined with the expertise of our own people, make the Axis 'brand' an even more powerful proposition.

The integration of the two businesses is progressing well. Integration, of course, is not simply about the 'physical' joining of two companies. It is also about

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ensuring that we have the right people with matching skill sets in the right jobs, and analysing the details – such as our accreditations and environmental systems – in order to develop a uniform approach to the business as a whole.

It is important to stress, however, that our growth strategy is not just based around acquisition. It is also critical that we continue to win new business and grow organically.

To this end we have had an excellent start to the new

financial year with a number of new contracts starting in the spring. The relationships we have forged over the years within the financial services industry, the property management sector and the media and arts fields are yielding many new opportunities for us, and I am delighted that our achievements to date are being recognised in the wider marketplace.

I am also delighted to herald the achievements of our staff, as recognised in a new series of monthly officer awards. This is a positive way of acknowledging and

rewarding those officers who go the extra mile, and whose exceptional performance, often in the most trying of circumstances, are highlighted by our clients. You can read more about their achievements inside.

We are undoubtedly entering a new phase in our company's history. The successes of the past have given us a solid platform on which to build our business for the future.

For now, however, let's just hope the sun shines long enough for us all to enjoy our summer!



Jonathan Levine, David Mundell and John Fitzpatrick brief Brian Sims, Editor of SMT Online, on the merger of Axis and Temple Security

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Officer of the Month Awards

Following the inaugural Axis Officer of the Year Awards, which were announced in December, Axis Security has launched the Officer of the Month Awards, to acknowledge the hard work and dedication demonstrated by Axis officers each and every month.

Each month the winners will be rewarded with 1,000 Red Letter Day points to put towards a treat or an adventure experience of their choosing (see article below).



The first award was announced in March, and went to **Mary Syme**, an Officer at the Brixton Refugee Centre, for successfully and calmly evacuating the centre when the fire alarm was raised. Mary has worked for Axis at the centre for a year, and was delighted to receive the award as she explains: "When the fire alarm went off, my first reaction was to make sure that the building was evacuated quickly and safely. Though it is all part of the job description, I was very pleased to be recognised with the Officer of the Month award, and look forward to being able to spend the Red Letter Day points."

In April, the Officer of the Month award went to **Michael Demetriou**. Michael was nominated by the customer, Withers, a leading law firm based at the Old Bailey, for the work he put in during a power cut on site to minimise disruption.

The power cut affected the whole area surrounding the Old Bailey, as Michael explains: "The power went down in the whole EC4 area just before 7pm,



5am following morning.

"During the cut there were a number of partners still in the building, and I helped them to get their bikes from the secure storage area and to reach their cars since the lifts were down." Michael was nominated for the award by Steve Laver, Head of Security at Withers, but is humble about the recognition. "I was surprised, but pleased to receive the award," Michael continues. "I have worked in security for nearly 20 years, and though this sort of incident is rare, it is part of the routine and important to be prepared. We all work as part of a strong team here

"it could have happened on anyone's shift; we all would have done the same."

at Withers, and it could have happened on anyone's shift; we all would have done the same. I'm very grateful for the recognition and pleased to receive the Red Letter Day points." When asked what he'd like to spend the 1,000 points on, Michael concludes: "I'd like to share them among the team."

And finally, the May award went to **Laszlo Kallo** in recognition of his hard work and attention to detail during the handover of the B&H Management

contract. B&H Management is a member of Great Portland Estates plc Group, a central London property investment company.



Axis took over the contract from the incumbent on the 1st April, to provide guarding to 18 sites across London. Laszlo worked hard to ensure the smooth transition, and was nominated for the award by the client. "As Axis took over the contract, there was much work to be done to ensure that everything was in place ready for the contract to go live," says Laszlo. "I did my utmost to make the necessary changes on site, liaising with the client, officers and Axis management for a smooth transition. We had no complaints, and the client was happy.

"It was very nice to be recognised for my efforts, and I was very pleased to be named as May's Officer of the Month. I'd also like to thank my colleagues for all their hard work during the handover."

Commenting on the awards, Operations Director John Fitzpatrick said: "The Officer of the Month Awards offer us a regular reminder of the importance of our workforce across a wide spectrum of assignments, and the dedication and commitment employees demonstrate each month. The awards have been designed to recognise the hard work and effort that can all too easily go unrewarded.

"I'd like to congratulate each of the winners so far and thank them for all their work, and I look forward to more winners in the future," he says.



Red Letter Day Points Scheme

To reward loyalty and high performance, Axis has teamed with Red Letter Days, the UK's leading experience company, to establish a scheme to reward high performance levels with Red Letter Day points. These points can be accrued over a period of time and redeemed against Red Letter Day experiences, for example adrenaline-packed adventures or pampering indulgences, or alternatively against tangible gifts including wine, chocolates, hampers and flowers.

The points will be awarded for length of service and high performance levels, as well as for the Officer of the Month Awards, birthdays, reaching appraisal targets and recommending a friend. Once staff have received the points, they can log on to the Red Letter Days website to view their points balance, and browse and select the experience options and gifts available to them. An officer passing the induction course, for example, would be rewarded with 500 points with a cash value of £50, while an Employee of the Month would receive 1,000 points, with a cash value of £100.

500 points would be enough for a karting day or a yearly subscription to a BBC magazine, while for 1,000 points staff could treat themselves to a Ferrari driving day. Points can also be accrued, and an officer saving 2,500 points for example, could splash out on a golfing weekend break for two, with a stay at a Marriott country club hotel, a round of golf on the hotel's course and dinner and breakfast.

To register for the points, you need to provide us with an email address for us to create an employee login. Once this registration has been completed, you can view your individual points balance and browse experience options by visiting the Axis Red Letter Days site, a link to which can be found in the employee login section on the Axis website.



INTERVIEW

Swimming with the tide

Sean Feast talks to Manny Adams

Manny Adams is the Operations Manager of the Refugee Council, the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. Not only does the Refugee Council give direct help and support to its clients, but it also works hard to ensure these clients are treated with understanding and respect, and expects its suppliers to share these values. In this exclusive interview, Sean Feast of Axis Direct managed to find a 20-minute window in Manny's otherwise hectic day.

SF: Tell us something about how you came to be working for the Refugee Council?

MA: I spent 20 years working in social services for a number of London Boroughs, including Brent, Merton and Ealing. I specialised in mental health work and those with learning disabilities, and in the course of my work came across many refugees. In 2000, an opportunity came up to work for the Refugee Council and I took it.

SF: So what do you do now?

MA: I am the Operations Manager and manage a team of 15 with a further four administrative staff. Between us we are very much on the front line; every client who comes into our building will come into contact with my team.

SF: And that includes security?

MA: It certainly does. We have about 60,000 clients coming through our doors each year and are able to help around 30,000 face-to-face. Some we cannot help because it is not within our remit, and we redirect them accordingly. Indeed, the very first people that our clients meet will be our front-of-house security team. They have an essential role to play in making our clients feel comfortable. You have to understand that many of our clients may have already been through the trauma of having to deal with the police and immigration and so we are the first friendly face they see. They don't want to be confronted by the type of heavy-handed security officer that in their country of origin may have been their primary tormentor.

SF: How are your officers trained to deal with such people?

MA: Their approach has to be passive rather than aggressive. Of course they have to be firm if need be, but they are trained to avoid confrontation wherever possible, and to use passive tactics to calm situations before they can get out of hand. I am pleased to say that since Axis has been on board, the

number of serious incidents has fallen dramatically, and that is a direct result of the quality of people they employ. It is understandable that sometimes our clients' frustration can spill over into aggression, but our officers are trained to recognise the signs, and do everything to avoid a situation becoming serious. To give you a simple example, our officers are on duty from 8am but our office does not open until 9am. Recently, it was raining, so our officers let those who were waiting outside into the building. It is that common sense and simple act of kindness and humanity that sets the right tone from the start, and benefits everybody in the long run.

SF: How did you come across Axis Security?

MA: We started working with Axis in November 2007. Our previous incumbent seemed to have lost interest in their staff and their welfare. We talked to Axis and they talked to us about the type of security officer we were looking for and how they would work with our clients. It was Axis, for example, that suggested a mix of male and female officers to give us a much better balance, and we hold regular meetings with their managers to discuss issues as they occur. Communication is very good. We kept the best of the officers from the previous contract, including the team leader Bill Hall, and that ensured continuity and experience.

SF: What services does Axis provide?

MA: We have a team of five security officers who, as well as manning the front desk, also perform a variety of reception duties such as answering the phone and directing our clients to the appropriate areas. We have a depth of experience in the team that means, if one of them is sick or on holiday, we always have a replacement on hand who has worked with us before, and that means there is a smooth handover of responsibilities. They can also speak something like seven different languages between them that reflect the bulk of the countries



that our clients come from including Farsi, Dari, Pashtu, Urdu, Punjabi, Somali – and English!

SF: Has the advent of the licensing of security officers made a difference?

MA: Yes it has. We know that we have officers that have been thoroughly checked and vetted, which is important given that they come into contact with children and other vulnerable people. We also know that they have been trained. Our officers seem proud to wear their SIA badges, and I'm sure that our other staff feel confident that our security is in the hands of competent teams. It has brought a new level of professionalism to the security industry.

SF: Is the quality of Management important?

MA: Very definitely. We enjoy an excellent relationship with the Axis team, and stability at a senior management level is very important. Regular contact and dialogue means that if change is needed it can happen very quickly.

SF: Outside of work, how do you find time to relax?

MA: My sons are avid Arsenal fans, so I find that I am now a fan whether I like it or not. I am also a keen collector of tropical fish, and find it difficult to visit an aquarium without coming out with something new for one of my four tanks. I prefer Gourami to Siamese Fighting Fish however. The former are passive and the latter aggressive, so the characteristics of my fish tend to reflect our preference in security officers!



Face to a name: **Martin Mathews**

As Special Project Manager, Martin Mathews' main task is to provide the bridge between the sales teams and the account managers on new contracts, helping to ensure that all the necessities are in place at the launch of a contract. Here Axisdirect takes the opportunity to learn a little more about him and his role.

Martin joined Axis in March 2009, but has worked in the security industry for the past 15 years. Having started out as an officer, he moved onto other roles including contracts manager and project manager, and most recently, project consultant. It was his previous experience of working with Jonathan Levine and the rest of the Axis management team, which led him to his present role, a move which he hasn't regretted.

"As with many people, I joined the manned guarding industry by chance," says Martin. "But I found I enjoyed the challenge, and the opportunities for career progression, so 15 years later, here I still am.

"My present role as Special Project Manager is very varied, and covers numerous responsibilities. First and foremost is contract mobilisation. When the sales team secures a new contract, there are a number of tasks to be completed before the contract is ready to go live, including site surveys, risk assessments, officer training and HR. I coordinate all these points of action to ensure that



the contract is ready to go live, and then as the contract nears the end of its first quarter, I drift away to let the account managers take the reins."

Martin is also Line Manager for the communications centre, ensuring the smooth operation of the control room and giving officers the support they need. He is also responsible for the train-to-gain scheme.

"It may be a cliché, but no two days are the same," continues Martin. "I enjoy the variety of the role and the interaction with both the customer and the workforce, making sure that everything is in order for all parties.

"I am challenged all the time, as each contract has its own demands, but I like being kept on my toes," he concludes.

Fulham Broadway

Axis Security is providing security services at The Fulham Broadway Retail Centre in South West London.

Fulham Broadway is home to restaurants, bars and shops, together with a cinema and fitness centre. Direct access is also provided through the centre to the District Line tube station. With the centre open seven days a week, from early in the morning to late at night, to allow access to the facilities, Axis Security provides a round-the-clock security presence.

"While their primary role is to ensure safety at the centre, the officers are also on hand to give assistance to visitors to the centre, for example, to help with directions," says Centre Manager, Pierre Ramboaniaina.

"Axis was awarded the contract on competitive tender, and we are happy with the level of service being provided. In a live environment we can be sure of an instant response and action to any issues that may arise."



InBrief

Environmental News

Since being awarded the internationally recognised ISO 14001 environmental accreditation earlier this year, Axis Security has been continuing to put its long-term pledge to implement sustainable, efficient and effective business practices into action.

ISO 14001 is the international management standard for the environment, providing businesses with a structured process for making environmental improvements. ISO 14001 specifies requirements for establishing an environmental policy, determining environmental aspects and impacts of products/activities/services, planning environmental objectives and measurable targets, implementation and operation of programmes to meet objectives and targets, checking and corrective action, and management review.

Axis Security was awarded the accreditation in recognition of its firm commitment to help the environment and reduce the environmental impact of its processes. Since passing the second (and final) stage of the accreditation in January, Axis has been working hard to ensure that the procedures under the standard are read and put into practice wherever possible at its customers' premises, and that it works together with its clients to ensure that environmental issues are given the prominence they deserve.

Environmental quiz

Just for fun, see if you can answer the following questions. It's trickier than you think!

A. What layer of gases protect the earth from the heat of the sun?

- Hydrosphere Biosphere
 Lithosphere Atmosphere

B. How long has the earth's climate been changing?

- 100 years 1 million years
 1 billion years 5 billion years

C. Which of the following is a greenhouse gas?

- Oxygen Carbon Dioxide
 Helium Sulphur Dioxide

D. What household appliance uses the most water?

- Dishwasher Sink
 Toilet Shower

Answers in Issue 4

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