



# 16 Ways Businesses Can Build and Maintain a Positive Relationship with Local Law Enforcement

*John P. Rodriguez*

One of the best ways to have a great security culture in your business is to have a positive, nurtured relationship with your local law enforcement (LE) agency. Though the following recommendations are focused on law enforcement, your local first responders (fire department and EMTs) should also be valued and included in building a lasting relationship.

These recommendations are designed for the security professional to have the opportunity to partner and guide the senior site leader to understand the good these will have for the LE community and positive impact to the site's security culture. By investing a little time and relatively small amounts of money to build police relationships in these very visible ways will add a new and on-going real and perceived sense of working at a place where leadership truly cares for the security of employees and their property.

Remember, for very many employees, their vehicles are, in some cases, the most valuable asset they have and are appreciative when a company makes significant efforts to keep them secure from external theft or vandalism. In recent years in the U.S., catalytic convertor theft has spiked and if victimized, employees bear the brunt of replacement, and as we all know, insurance policy deductibles drive outlays of valuable cash from the victim's pockets. And when one employee is victimized, the stress and concerns of "am I next?" spreads at the speed of internet among other employees.

Business leaders fortunate to not have to worry about being able to pay for these costs have a chance to be empathic and compassionate and do what they can in teaming with the security department to consider the following preventative measures. In addition to employee's property, a company's own assets can be better protected by implementing as many of these ideas as possible. When considering difficult terminations or workplace violence threats, the value of having positive law enforcement relationships way before you might need assistance should be emphasized by the security team. My philosophy is "I want every patrol officer where our site is located to know exactly who we are, where we are located, and that we have been long-standing community partners and supporters."

Under their stoic work faces, law enforcement officers are aware and perceptive human beings and having a favorable feeling towards your business will only result in a higher level of a holistic security program and everyone at your site will sense that relationship in a positive light.

So here are just 16 ways to develop and maintain a special bond:

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1. **Be a good corporate/community citizen – directly connect with the Police Chief or Sheriff:** The senior-most site business leader can prepare a letter introducing themselves, the company and express gratitude for all LE does and that you want to do more to support the department. Ask for an in-person introductory meeting at their office or better yet, invite her or him to lunch. Share what your business does at a high level, information on your employees and any security/crime concerns you or your employees may have. In fact, once you get an appointment with the Chief or Sheriff, let your employees know about that meeting and ask them what concerns they may have – the simple act of asking is powerful in itself to show employees your security culture is a living priority, and you keep it front of mind. Remember, your first meeting should be general and not the chance to march in with a list of grievances to demand action – that's not the intent of this meeting.

The Chief or Sheriff may not be officed in your police zone/district, so ask him or her if they could introduce you to the station commander in your area and then do it again – reach out for the same meet and greet. Lastly, ask the Chief or station commander if a primary point of contact can be established for seamless communication going forward. Once you have that person established, you will now have 3 law enforcement contacts to build upon!

2. **The power of breaking bread together:** If you have any type of events involving all your employees and food, add a few more burgers on the grill or order a couple of more pizzas and invite the patrol officers to join you for a meal. Even if no officers are available to swing by the intent you made by keeping them in mind will be appreciated and not forgotten.
3. **Invite the Crime Prevention team:** Most police department have one or more officers assigned to crime prevention initiatives. Invite them over to speak to your employees during a team meeting or lunch chat and chew to learn about any crime trends, share crime prevention tips and connect with the employees. If LE has posters, brochures, etc., make these available to all employees.
4. **Hire Off-Duty:** If you ever have the need for extra security coverage, and depending on the circumstances, consider hiring an off-duty officer for temporary coverage. Of course, contract security services can provide an excellent option, but if the issue at hand presents elevated risks or concerns, the extra cost of an off-duty officer may be an option to consider. Remember to check ahead of time to know if the LE agency authorized the officers to work off-duty assignments. Most do, but conduct your due diligence first. And some agencies have a designated coordinator for that service, and you should know the process and get set up in their data base before the need arises. Even if the department does not provide off-duty, the effort to inquire will be meaningful to the department that you would have given them some off-duty work.
5. **Mentor officers and/or their family members:** Offer transition guidance and mentoring to LE interested in entering corporate security or business specialties is very much appreciated. I've been helping officers in these areas for 30 of my 40 years as a security management generalist and provide a *realistic* perspective of what it takes to be successful. Many officers have kids or other family members interested in various professions and pooling your leadership and skilled trades to offer guidance and mentorship to Officer's relatives is a great way to help. Accounting, HR, Management, IT, Engineering and Logistics are just a few areas that can be offered.
6. **Provide your facility for tactical training:** Police tactical teams train often and offering your facility for a training event would be appreciate. However, a significant amount of planning is needed to ensure all expectations, requirements and precautions are met for a successful event.

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7. **Invite Crisis Intervention Team:** Many departments have mental health crisis intervention teams that can come and present to your workforce about all the do. Their information is extremely educational and information employees will take away and may share with their families. Leadership should also be aware of this invaluable resource in the remote case of an on-site mental health issue. Do not hesitate to call 911 or the new 988 system and request and CIT officer to respond. These officers have special training and experience in leading with de-escalation, empathy, and compassion.

As the mental health crisis grows in the country more and more departments are incorporating this training into their police academies and on-going training programs. For security professionals wanting to learn more about mental health, crisis intervention and de-escalation, read: Mental health & De-escalation: A guide for law enforcement professionals, by Ernest Stevens (from the award-winning HBO documentary "Ernie & Joe Crisis Cops"), and a personal inspiration of mine.

8. **Send surprise meals just to say thank you: Have I mentioned food?** If you budget an extra \$300 per year to send some great BBQ or pizza to the station once or twice a year – just to say “thanks for protecting us” will be much appreciated and remembered.
9. **Partner with neighboring business to:**
- Develop a neighborhood crime watch
  - Pool funds for scholarships, Police Athletic Leagues, community and benevolent initiatives, etc.
  - Hold annual LE appreciation events – request local restaurant gift cards and air tickets and hotel contributions from your travel vendors. Many ASIS International Chapters do this. The North Texas ASIS chapter has held an incredible annual LE Appreciation event for over 30+ years and still going strong and has been the role model for other chapters.
10. **Offer your site for officers to use your parking lot, café/breakroom, and facilities:** The more welcoming you are and the more visits you have by patrol officers, the more of a crime deterrent your site will have and safer your employees will feel.
11. **Law Enforcement Reserved Parking:** Reserve a parking space in a prominent location near the building entrance and visible from the street and install a sign on the wall or on a post at the space that states:



This is an excellent way to strengthen your site's security culture.

12. **Send commendations anytime an officer responds:** Anytime a police officer or sheriff's deputy responds to your site for any reason, remember to get their name and their supervisor's information and let them know you appreciate their professionalism and will send a note to commend their fine work.

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Start with “I appreciate your professional manner and would like to let your supervisor know we are grateful, instead of “I want your badge number” ...that won’t go over well. And send the note promptly – don’t let time pass. Train your leadership team on this so they’ll ensure the initial information is gather for you to then prepare the communication.

13. **Corporate foundation funds:** For larger enterprises with philanthropic grants, learn what initiative the LE agency may need funding support with, for example, providing additional CIT training to officer and with your site business leader solicit funding for that – any amount will be appreciated.
14. **Do you provide employee discounts on co. products?** Consider extending the discounts to the officers in your area.
15. **Have a robust mental health program where information can be shared with law enforcement and their families?** There is never enough to learn about mental health. Work with your police point of contact to potentially share innovative and impactful resources and ideas that your HR, Benefits or EAP provider may have.
16. **Spread the word:** Share this list with vendors and neighboring business to consider these ideas.

In closing, the kindness, respect, appreciation, and partnership businesses can demonstration to their local law enforcement agencies can positively demonstrate that they are a critical component to their employees and operation. A second benefit are employees feeling a real and perceived sense of protection and a consistent effort by leadership to build a security culture where everyone agrees to help protect each other and the business. The compound benefits to business success are also numerous.

Another way to think of making some of these recommendations is this - if there are two businesses in the general vicinity (yours and your competitors that do the exact same thing), and your competitor has a fence around the parking lot and you do not, then employee vehicle losses occur and the problem is well known, where do you think employees would prefer to work at? Certainly, fencing is a significant CapEx and doing some or all of the above will cost a small fraction of that along with a little time and effort.

Lastly, there are multiple examples of LE’s extra-ordinarily response and support I’ve experienced over the years that I would be glad to share to help you build your business case to add this to your security culture.

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John Rodriguez is the founder of Empathic Security Cultures LLC based in Austin, TX, and brings 40+ years of pure corporate security experience working for major corporations including General Motors, Kimberly-Clark, Levi Strauss & Co., and Cardinal Health. He previously was the CSO for Temple-Inland in Austin, TX.

While with Kimberly-Clark Corporation, security director for Latin American operations, the company was ranked #1 of 1,900 companies from 2009-2011 by the *Great Place to Work Institute*®. John’s innovative security strategies were recognized by senior leadership as critical contributions to those years of #1 rankings. Business sales ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> place in every country of operation.

He has authored articles including: [How to Build a Best-in-Class Security Culture](#) for ASIS International – this was 1 of the 12 most read articles in 2022.