Reviews

Principles of Security and Crime Prevention, Fourth Edition

by P.A. Collins, T.A. Rick and C.W. Van Meter

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Reviewed by Catherine Park

Some people involved in the security field are lucky (or unlucky!) enough to be immersed, on a regular basis, in an extremely wide range of security and crime-related issues, ranging from practical applications to broader social issues. The rest of us sometimes have the uncomfortable feeling that we need to broaden out and get back to basics and theories—a process that would help us deal more effectively with others in the sector, provide new ideas for future plans and avoid pitfalls. This book is an absolutely ideal aid for this latter category of individual.

Of course, in simple terms, this publication is a textbook particularly suited to students starting out in their career—the study questions at the end of each chapter are testament to that! But the broad overview the book provides means that any security practitioner who feels there are gaps in their knowledge (or indeed anyone who needs a better understanding of the security world) will find it useful.

Despite obvious space constraints, the authors admirably summarise the main security considerations facing practitioners in different types of environment, for example financial, retail, healthcare. Particularly useful for those lacking in confidence about security equipment are the chapters which detail comprehensively but succinctly the different options available in, for example, fencing, lighting, locks, access control, safes. This is all put in context with a general discussion of the role that layout, security equipment and personnel should play in keeping lines of defence outside and inside a premises operating effectively.

For those of us who are always hearing and talking about security surveys but have never been told how to conduct one, this publication provides excellent guidance, including the all-important issue of gaining management support and backing. Just one slight quibble—it might have been useful to go into slightly more detail about circumstances in which to conduct a risk assessment as opposed to a security survey, and when one should lead to another.

On the more theoretical side, the publication provides an interesting overview of reasons for criminal behaviour, leading into practical guidance on the difficult issue of dealing with internal crime. The book presents very sensible approaches to preventing and detecting such crimes, while also highlighting the importance of looking at the company's performance in providing job satisfaction and achieving balance so that staff morale is not negatively impacted by overly rigid security procedures.

The publication concludes with a very useful appendices section offering, for example, sample job descriptions, desirable training content, risk identification procedures and a security survey checklist.

Non-US readers need to be aware that quite a lot of the practices, legislation and standards described relate to the United States only although the general principles with which the publication is principally concerned hold true world-wide. Indeed it is interesting to contrast US examples with developments in other countries. For example, there is quite a detailed section looking at initiatives in which the police are co-operating with private security in the US, which is an issue that we also are currently trying to get to grips with in the UK.

The scope and conciseness of this publication, as well as its excellent balance between theory and concrete examples, mean that it is a valuable addition to existing material on security principles.

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