



ceocfointerviews.com
© All rights reserved
Issue: May 13, 2019

CEOCFO Magazine

Premier Security Inc. providing Commercial Security Services including Guard Coverage, Investigations, Mobile Patrol, Alarm Response and Surveillance across Western Canada

Mathew Parker
President

Premier Security Inc.

Contact:
CEOCFO Magazine
570-851-1745

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Parker, would you tell us about Premier Security?*

Mr. Parker: We have provided security services for over 30 years by focusing on clients' specific security needs. The majority of our business comes from traditional security guard assignments although we do this through embracing the latest and greatest of new technologies, and from a very responsive customer service program. We get to know our clients and their industries by focusing on only a few industry verticals at a time. At Premier we are particularly proud of our management team who, I would argue, have one of the longest tenures in the industry. It is this stability and trust that attracts many excellent employees to us as well and we are proud to currently employ several hundred people. When you think about it, we have provided millions of hours of coverage to clients and this doesn't happen by accident. I think that success is in how we treat our people.

CEOCFO: *Where are you focusing and how have you decided on these areas?*

Mr. Parker: We are a B2B firm and we focus on commercial security. Specifically we serve cultural and artistic institutions, class A office buildings, light industry, financial institutions, and remote camps which we have a lot of experience in as well. If we can keep it to those five, I think we will continue to do well. We did spend several years going quite broad in other areas and that has had its benefits but now we are honing in on our core business again.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread among those five?*

Mr. Parker: The commonality would be the sometimes tricky skill of finding security staff who fit the particular corporate culture of each individual client. The technical and tactical security issues remain important of course, but we'd rather train for skill than for attitude. This is a concern and focus no matter in what industry we are operating. We have built up expertise and it has been mainly organic, which is where we have had success so we have tried to stick with it.

CEOCFO: *What is the range of services that you provide?*

Mr. Parker: We provide security, investigators, and mobile patrol personnel to commercial security. Any service that comes out of that is based on the people that we recruit and hold onto. That includes alarm response, scheduled mobile patrols, static guard, surveillance and all those kinds of things. Providing trained and professional people who understand why they are posted at a particular site is key. For example, even between similar facilities, sometimes the emphasis is on access control, and other times it can be more customer service or hosting.

CEOCFO: *When you are working with an organization, what are you looking at to help them devise the appropriate security strategy?*

Mr. Parker: There are many things to consider when planning security strategy. We have developed many systems backed by solid research and policy over the years. From analyzing historical data, forecasting risk, and planning for mitigation, we provide staff with the rationale for security, in depth training, and regular assessments. Our compliance team is then responsible for ensuring these duties and tasks conform with legal requirements and client approval.

We have found, however, that all this rests on our ability to deploy the right people for each site. I know that sounds more like matchmaking than security strategy but we are providing personnel that need to work collaboratively with our customers. They need to take direction well, but must also feel comfortable to suggest solutions. No matter how good we are at security planning, we are only as good as this frontline relationship. We try to get the right people in there and to do that we have to understand what clients want, so that comes down to transition planning, lots of meetings at the senior level, and setting up a reporting structure that makes sense. Even more than having the right tools, technologies and systems, we believe successful security really comes down to the ability to quickly orient new staff with each of our clients' unique corporate cultures.

CEOCFO: *Do most organizations take security seriously?*

Mr. Parker: Our clients do, yes. Otherwise we would not likely take their business. We have clients that have been with us for over twenty years, and they see the value in it. The skill for us is weeding through the majority of leads who are kicking the tires of the industry and seeing if they actually need a guard or an alarm response. The clients we have know the value and the security personnel that come through their door every day and that is based on professionalism and all those key things like knowledge, skills and attitudes. We have not found too many people who do not take the industry seriously.

“Even more than having the right tools, technologies and systems, we believe successful security really comes down to the ability to quickly orient new staff with each of our clients' unique corporate cultures.”- Mathew Parker

CEOCFO: *Are security guards more respected today than they might have been years back? How do you help?*

Mr. Parker: Although I have stories to the contrary, I have more that are positive. I think they are more respected now in general. A lot of employees and applicants who we see are interested in security and not simply on their way to another job. It seems less transient now too. They just like the environment in our office, the client's venue or workplace, and the customer service role that they play. We have to foster that by interviewing lots and lots of people. Out of every one hundred people we see we probably funnel through twenty and then ten of those probably make it into positions based on client choice, our choice and the guard's choice. In a way, we are a service provider to our employees, and the service we provide is to find them a positive and interesting workplace. Having good clients makes this possible. If we are doing our matchmaking work well, respect is automatic.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic range and will that be changing?*

Mr. Parker: Although we are involved in national and international security assignments from time to time our short term target is to become the regional provider of choice and try to limit it to B.C. and Alberta. I do not see that changing too much. I would like to just go deeper into those provinces and their particular and unique industries. This also involves actively looking for acquisition opportunities. Employment markets are very localized so part of our strategy is to understand these specific areas even better in order to find the right people more quickly. We believe, somewhat ironically, that limiting our reach is the best route to healthy growth.

CEOCFO: *Where does health and safety come in?*

Mr. Parker: It is the most important thing. I have done this for a long time and so have a lot of people here. You know that you are going to sleep at night and hundreds of people are still working for you. You do feel quite a bit of concern for their health safety. We have lots of systems in place if you are working alone, working remotely, we have call-in systems and personnel and supervisors working all night long. The health and safety of what they do is paramount, whether they are driving a car in winter conditions or it is summertime and heat stroke is a danger, or issues like confined space dangers. We try to educate them on all those things that can affect health and safety. We have a meeting with all members of management and guard force representation as well at least every month. We take a lot of data points and a lot of information about health and safety issues throughout the company. We identify any problems and we rectify these as quickly as possible. We also use and appreciate new and young worker guidelines and checklists provided by various government agencies and compliance organizations like Avetta and Canqual.

CEOCFO: *You mentioned investigations earlier, when might you be called in to help companies?*

Mr. Parker: Usually to provide background checks, civil and criminal investigations, forensic document examination, statement taking or surveillance. We try to stick to the commercial side of things; we do not do a lot of personal work. It is all to make sure people and things are safe and our clients' operations are running smoothly. Just imagine all of the things that can go wrong - we record and report these accurately to our clients.

CEOCFO: *Where and how might technology come into play today for you?*

Mr. Parker: It's already in play. That is the biggest question that I think about every day. We are using technology more and more even for the traditional functions and operations, manpower if you will, it is essential. We use them for tracking personnel, scheduling cloud-based data backup, all that kind of work. Guards know that they have quite a responsibility when it comes to reporting. I often tell them that the humble report is the only tangible evidence that they have done a good job and to therefore take it seriously. The newer reporting systems have been upgraded quite successfully where there is very little that distracts them from doing their job, and they can report accurately in real-time and still do their patrols properly. In the past, reporting was a bit arduous as guards would sometimes be looking at a piece of paper instead of looking at the venue they are supposed to be patrolling. We have automated the admin side of reporting so guards can focus on the content which are the actual security concerns, risks, maintenance problems and liabilities.

We also use strategies usually reserved for the high-tech world, to make our low-tech services more efficient. When you think about it, any service is a series of steps, redundancies and assessments - an algorithm if you will. We typically start any planning with a kind of user-centric design. The needs, wants, and limitations of clients are given extensive attention at every stage of service set up and site order development. We map these userflows and train staff accordingly. We are always keen on cutting costs and this is where tech, if used properly, can shine. Back office savings in areas such as payroll, invoicing, and scheduling have become much more efficient and therefore saves time and money.

Most importantly tech doesn't take away from our employees' importance but allows us to prove our value more than ever before. As an account manager you used to sometimes find yourself in a position of defending the value of deterrence. It was like being asked to prove how many crimes you prevented. But now we can prove when and where staff are at all times and can use this data to recommend improvements before problems arise. One of our short-term goals is to be the most high-tech low-tech company in Western Canada.

CEOCFO: *How and when do you call in the authorities and how do you interact if there is a situation?*

Mr. Parker: We find if deterrence-based planning is done effectively, the authorities are not usually needed. However when the individual guard feels that they need to call the police, they are encouraged to do so. Calling 911 is only the beginning of incident response however. Guards need to know what to communicate to the authorities, so being aware and observant, reporting accurately, and being able to articulate the problem to the first responder in those first few minutes are critical skills. That is what we do through training, emergency evacuation, drills - all those things that help the guards know when to call the police and when not to. That is quite a serious and important judgment call. We focus on that quite a bit.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential customers?*

Mr. Parker: We do everything we can. We try to focus on referral based growth and I can say that probably 80% of our growth has come from that, which is the best way really because there is a level of understanding. If leads are referred, then you know they are actually needing the service and are just deciding if they want us or another company. We also try to tap our workforce's network because it is quite large. We always ask them if they see an opportunity for new business or recruiting to let us know. Other traditional marketing includes networking, conferences, sponsorships and even print advertising. Digital marketing is not overlooked either, and delivers powerful analytics for us. Everything gets tracked, measured, and improved upon over time. This is the amazing thing about digital marketing. The guess-work of marketing has been eliminated and we get real-time feedback that zeroes in on what clients are searching for, along with the ability to measure what works and what doesn't. This lets us readjust our focus by targeting client's needs, and frees up management to focus on clients and employees.

CEOCFO: *What is the competitive landscape?*

Mr. Parker: In any region there are probably hundreds of companies, most of them would be quite small and many of them would be one-person operations or a small group dealing with a localized problem. As long as they have their licensing and their compliance sorted, they can do that to a limited extent. The main competitors who we focus on are the ones that are slightly bigger than us because that is where we want to be. These are mainly regional and national players. There are probably five or six in western Canada who are companies we admire and consider competitors.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Premier Security?*

Mr. Parker: To work with us you are getting a long-term management group, fifteen to twenty years retention, thirty years in business, and you are getting a family approach as well. We try to understand your service or product and then just protect it. Senior management is always close by, you are not going through a bureaucracy to get to a decision-maker. You know who the decision-maker is because you just had coffee with him and went over site orders at your site. We do not want to lose this approach and is why we want to focus on western Canada for now.