

Meet the installer

Security life with Andy Convery of IPSS in Coventry

Do you use a distributor or buy direct?

We do both with a lot of our products and equipment sourced through Mayflex and NBM. We buy the Smokecloak systems direct. We've been with Mayflex for years and it's our most predominantly used account for the products that we use and install.

Is third party accreditation beneficial to your company?

It's extremely beneficial and our approval through an independent audit proves to our customers and others in the sector that we are professional in the way we work and run our business. We have always looked at gaining accreditations for the work that we do and in the last four months we have secured our NSI NACOSS Gold, SafeContractor, ISO9001 and CHAS for over five employees to go alongside our CyberEssentials.

Now that we are NSI Gold it brings to the forefront our credentials as installers. This means that when we advise our customers I think that brings it more to their attention because we are coming from a position of authority.

To be honest, in the past I always thought gaining approval was just a tick-box exercise, but having gone through the process I know that's not the case. The two auditors we've had in were fantastic, in fact I can say that the whole of the NSI has helped us. It's great that what we do can be measured to such a very high standard.



Name: Andy Convery
Job title: Technical Sales Director
Time in security/fire: 19 years
Company: IPSS
Location: Coventry-based but working nationwide
Areas of expertise: CCTV, access control and security smoke
Accreditations: NSI Gold, ISO 9001, CHAS and SafeContractor

What would be a typical project for you?

We are concentrating on our B2B customers. Our specialist area is the open campus environment and we advise, design, install and support customers who have large dynamic areas. It's highly challenging as the security threat can change dramatically and quickly within these areas and with our guidance, this is controlled. We like to be dynamic in what we install and so limit ourselves to a number of products that have been tried and tested and are proved to work in these environments. We predominantly use Avigilon and Mobotix because it's really good kit and it works all the time.

We do very little for domestic customer anymore. There are so many basic security products out there for homeowners that can be bought online or in your local DIY outlets. It →

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makes our high quality products and professional installation a hard sell.

Are there any common requests from customers that give you problems?

There isn't anything specific but I do think that there is a lack of knowledge with some customers as to what they are going to get and what it can do. They don't really understand the technology and because we have a regular request to install systems after a security problem has occurred, they don't necessarily want to spend any time looking at different options.

What is the best thing about working in security?

When I was a kid I always wanted to go into the armed forces and never did, but I now feel like I'm helping bring security in another way. Our key area is academia and we want to make schools, colleges and universities safer because we believe in education and ensuring that our children are given all of the chances possible in a safe environment. We want to make sure they're safe by offering a professional service and making sure that people feel secure. Nowadays situations can change quickly and dramatically.

Is there is a security skills shortage?

Yes, there is a massive shortage of talent. We've just gone through a recruitment process for a new engineer. We got the feeling that those applying knew about the skills shortage and had the attitude that they could ask for more money than their talent actually warranted.

We need more qualified engineers and for a better educated public on the benefits of using approved companies. There is a massive shortage and it's difficult to train your own engineers. While we were researching apprenticeship courses we only found one course within the whole of the UK that met our criteria so enrolling people on this course would require them to travel into Knutsford (nearly 100 miles each way).

What will be the impact of smart/home automation on the security sector?

While the take-up of the technology is growing and is heavily marketed we need to ensure that the public is made aware of any relevant legislation and emphasise the importance of having the system installed and maintained by professional, accredited installers. All of the marketing is telling people they can fit it themselves so there's no guarantee it will be fitted properly or in the right place which does not make for good security. Legislation such as GDPR and ICO registration are not common knowledge

so while people can buy cameras there's more to fitting it than just fixing it to a wall. Another problem with many of the home surveillance systems is that it is nearly all internal, so it's not protecting anything. By the time it starts recording, it's too late.

What is the industry's biggest myth?

It can be tricky getting beyond the mindset that some people have about intruder alarms not doing anything to prevent burglaries - all as a result of bells-only systems being ignored by passers-by. The lack of awareness about ARCs and police response can lead people to believe that alarms either serve no purpose or they can fit it themselves. Only a properly installed system will work properly.

Are you concerned about Brexit?

I think everyone has got to be concerned to some extent. I've spoken to some very big companies about this and for me, I think that if bigger companies that have more money to spend on researching these things aren't too worried then I'm not either. My local Chamber of Commerce in Coventry is offering a lot of support, but we still don't really know what will happen. I think that perhaps it's being made a drama because the European Union is scared of us leaving as we are such a major player - there are other countries in Europe that aren't in the EU and they are doing fine.

What would make your job easier?

Having more people that are willing to go above and beyond (like Sharon who works in our office) come and work here would be great.

What is your ultimate/fantasy electronic security product?

A camera that stops dogs from barking!

Will England ever win the football World Cup again?

Yes - it's coming home! While the next competition is going to be played at high temperatures in Qatar I'm not too concerned because everyone will have to play in the heat. I'm sure that the FA has already planned what needs to be done in order to compete in those conditions.

If you won £25,000 what would you do with it?

I'd donate it to Zoe's Place, which is a local baby hospice. It's a charity that does a lot for the kids and their parents and I don't think they get enough money or attention. I did a half marathon last year for them so I support them.

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