

Spotlight feature on:



Installers respond to NSI's blended audit



The NSI's auditors, at a pre-Covid gathering (photo courtesy of the NSI)

As 'lockdown' eases, NSI is adopting a 'blended' audit strategy based upon a careful mix of remote and on-site audit capability fit for a post-pandemic world, and in sync with Government Covid-19 Secure guidelines (as described last edition).

NSI auditors are focusing on supporting approved companies in getting back on track with their scheduled audit regime, in recognition of the important part certification plays in demonstrating professionalism and competency to buyers and verifying the competency of certified service providers in the security sector. In essence, certification plays proxy for the discerning buyer, providing confidence in the capability and integrity of providers. While remote auditing has been in the auditors' toolbox for years, with much of the security industry's work and services conducted on site or in the field, on-site audits continue to be essential in gathering evidence of compliance to technical product (and service) standards.

Sharp-end experiences

How have NSI certificated companies completing a remote audit found the process?

Kathy Bishop is General Manager at Crime Prevention Services, a Chester-based NSI Gold provider of electronic security systems including access control, CCTV and intruder alarms.

Following your recent remote audit, could you describe how this worked for you?

"The set-up and technology required for the remote audit was straightforward and easily obtainable. By not having a site visit, we were able to maintain current social-distancing measures in our workplace and did not have the added risk of new people entering the building."

What differences if any did you notice from not having the auditor by your side?

"The format was very similar to an in-person audit and with the video-audio link it didn't feel unnatural or forced. The audit was clearly directed and allowed for open answers and easy conversation

between the auditor and our office-based team."

What technologies did you use to complete the process and how did you find it?

"We used [Microsoft] Teams to host the video-conference and standard webcam/mic/speakers. The conference video call was smooth, with no distortion or lagging issues."

Looking at the whole audit process, were there any challenges that you were able to address successfully and could you describe the way this was achieved?

"The whole audit process ran very smoothly, with only a very small hiccup at the very end (regarding) 'sign off' on the notes raised during the audit (followed by) the auditor emailing the screen-shot of the notes (so) we were able to digitally 'sign' by reply email to acknowledge understanding and acceptance."

From your perspective, do you understand why NSI's approach is a 'blended' one (using both remote and site visits) and do you have any comments on the strategy of combining these approaches (focusing the remote element on 'management systems')?

"The ability to undertake remote audits is a sensible option for businesses, especially at the current time. With the technology and software available now remote audits are a viable way to connect businesses and auditors when an on-site audit is not ideal or desirable due to extenuating circumstances. Overall we were very impressed with the professionalism shown by our auditor and we really appreciated the support in completing the audit remotely, when doing so face-to-face would have proven difficult, if not impossible. Having blended audits with NSI is an exciting prospect as we continue to use new and existing technology to get the most out of our audit."

Nanette Moulton is Business Operations Manager at Kent company Securitem Group, an NSI Gold installer of CCTV, intruder alarm and access control systems.

Following your recent remote audit, could you describe how this worked for you?

"Despite our quality audit being due during the unprecedented period of 'lockdown' we were able to proceed utilising Microsoft Teams, which allowed us the ability to share documents and screens and maintain an in-person conversation. **What differences if any did you notice from not having the auditor by your side?**

"We were able to use our time and resources in a way that made a minimum difference to having the auditor in the same room. The main difference was in our preparation, where we had to more actively pre-empt documents that would be required. Being restricted by home working requirements limited the information we were able to demonstrate."

What technologies did you use to complete the process and how did you find it?

"The audit was via Microsoft Teams. We had a test call the day prior to the audit to make sure everything would work as we needed it to."

Looking at the whole audit process, were there any challenges that you were able to address successfully and could you describe the way this was achieved?

"Teams did freeze towards the end of the day; however, we were able to continue and finish the audit as we still had the use of a microphone."

Do you understand why NSI's approach is a 'blended' one (using both remote and site visits) and do you have any comments on the strategy of combining these approaches (focusing the remote element on 'management systems')?

"The world and the way meetings are conducted is changing, expedited by Covid-19. It is great that NSI has been able to adapt and continue to complete management systems audits. Having these interspersed with site visits means we can demonstrate we are doing 'what it says on the tin'. However these do need to be combined with 'in person' audits in all areas for a more holistic view. NSI audits are renowned for being rigorous, detailed, and professional and Securitem Installations are particularly proud to hold this accreditation to evidence our continuous commitment to quality service." □