

Meet the installer

Security life with Mike Ockelford of Colt Security in Basildon, Essex

What would be a typical project for you?

I would class the majority of installations we do as medium risk. We've always done a lot of domestic work and it is a core part of what we do and we've been fortunate enough to develop that work over the years as the different technologies have come along. We also do a lot of work for businesses and we've taken on contracts for council work as well. As we've grown so have the projects that we've been able to take on. We treat each job that comes in as a unique proposition with its own requirements and risks.

Do you have any 'go to' technology?

We favour Texecom panels for commercial installations and RISCO technology for the domestic jobs. We particularly like the RISCO system because of the app. I would say that in the last four years since LightSYS came out we have seen a big growth in domestic customers wanting that type of offering.

What is the best thing about working in security?

There are two things to be honest. Firstly, every day is different and you're faced with different issues all of the time. Secondly, the diverse customer base we've developed over 34 years is great. It's nice to be in contact with people I've dealt with since the very first day I did my first survey. Clients really want that personal contact and that has always been the way we do business.

Is third party accreditation beneficial to you?

It is, especially for the higher risk jobs such as installing security systems for jewellers. We need that NSI Gold certification to enable us to carry



Name: Mike Ockelford

Job title: Managing Director

Time in security/fire: 40+ years having left school to work as an apprentice with Chubb Alarms in 1978 then starting Colt in 1988

Company: Colt Security

Location: Basildon, Essex

Areas of expertise: CCTV, intruder alarms and access control for domestic and commercial applications

Accreditations: NSI Gold

out the maintenance and the installations in that field, so without it we wouldn't get the contracts.

Do you think there is a skills shortage in the industry? Any trouble recruiting?

We are in the process of recruiting at the moment and it's not easy. We need to bring an engineer into the office to help with the day-to-day calls that are coming in. New technology comes out very quickly these days and we need someone here that can help with IT queries rather than pulling an engineer off the road. However finding an experienced engineer is very, very difficult. A big problem is with backward capacity on panels ie knowing all about the panels from when we first started up to present date models. When I first started there was just one manual and that was what you used to do your job while today there are 30-40 manuals and different software out there so engineers have got to be very versatile to be able to accommodate backward compatible panels and also work on today's software and panels. Finding the balance and getting an experienced engineer on board is proving difficult.

"We favour Texecom panels for commercial installations and RISCO technology for the domestic jobs"



The history of Colt Security sounders!

(continued from previous page)



“When we do a risk assessment we always give recommendations of what we think is best suited to meet the requirements of the site and the customer”

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

When we do a risk assessment we always give recommendations of what we think is best suited to meet the requirements of the site and the customer. The problem that we have is sometimes when we're putting forward our recommendations the client has different ideas on what they should have. Educating the client in what's available and what can be done is occasionally very hard. Price is obviously a concern, but they often don't seem to realise that we're suggesting the solution for their own good and you have to try and get them to look at it in the same way that you're focusing on their particular risk. Clients do try and cut down on protection whereas we've got an obligation to provide a suitable system design. It's very rare, but we have had to walk away from installations because we can't accommodate what they're actually asking for and we would be liable for the system that we are installing.

What is the security industry's biggest myth?

When I first started off in the business there was a common one that if you have an alarm system fitted then you must have something of value worth stealing. We had to deal with that by saying that everybody's got something of value, but it's not just the material losses there's also the damage and destruction which can be avoided by deterring the intruder with an alarm.

Another myth we see, although it's very rare, involves service contracts. With all of our systems we have a service contract yet we do occasionally hear "why does it need servicing if you put it in correctly?" Customers don't particularly understand that the system needs servicing for battery changes, updates etc to avoid ongoing problems in the future.

What would make your job easier?

It would make my life a lot easier if people didn't

rely on emails so much these days. We get emails coming in for instance on breakdowns which would originally have been a conversation that we had on the telephone. So it would be nice to have a program that could identify issues coming in on emails because customers are just sending in emails and not communicating. It can be so frustrating when we have an email come in at 11pm rather than a one-to-one conversation. With a phone call, you know about the problem because you've spoken about it, but an email is just another message coming in along with everything else.

What is your ultimate/fantasy electronic security/fire product?

I can't think of one - we're busy enough using the technology that already exists! In terms of running the business itself my son came on board about 18 months ago to help us change things like the website and he's also digitised the filing system which has resulted in us getting a bigger office because we don't need all the filing cabinets any more. However we were unfortunately one of the companies hit by the WannaCry virus which shut us down for about a month. That was a worrying time, we had to take all of the computers away and that's the worry with the way in which technology is going and our reliance upon it. I'm so concerned because everything is now saved to the cloud and paperwork is disappearing and so you do hope your system is good enough to cope with what might come along in the future. For us it all came back because we had backed up all the files, but it is a worry that with one click you could wipe out all of your hard work.

What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?

I think "stay true to your beliefs and go by your heart". Hopefully through my career I've taken the right choices on what I thought was the right decision to make at the time. There have only been a few times that I can probably look back on and say I should have stuck to my original belief.

Will England ever win the football World Cup again?

Not in my lifetime! I have other football worries as a Leyton Orient supporter....

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

I'd hold a big staff party to celebrate because we have a great team working here and they are the reason we are successful.