

WHITE PAPER

Fire and security system retrofits



Owners or facilities managers of older buildings are frequently faced with the need to replace all or part of an aging fire and/or security system.

Who should decide what equipment to use?

It's a daunting task and you need an experienced partner.

The owners or facilities managers of older buildings are frequently faced with the need to replace all or part of an aging fire and/or security system. Replacing or retrofitting an antiquated fire and/or security system is usually an unwelcome development, especially for those unfamiliar with all of the code requirements and technical details in the nuances of these critical life safety systems. As a result, building owners often rely solely on electrical contractors to decide the equipment to be used for a fire and/or security system retrofit.

While electrical contractors are excellent advisers in their areas of expertise, when it comes to fire and/or security systems, working with a pre-qualified contractor specializing in fire and/or security system installation, inspection and service will result in a higher value, lower cost system and fewer headaches down the road.



Retrofitting is usually an unwelcome development especially for those unfamiliar with all of the code requirements and technical details

Confusion can be costly

For example, an electrical contractor may prepare a specification listing several acceptable manufacturers.

- In some cases, this list may include a dozen or more companies and it's not unusual for there to be several manufacturers listed that are either no longer in business or operate under a different business name due to a merger or acquisition.
- Sometimes outdated system model numbers are referenced and it's not uncommon to see specifications that are 30 or 40 pages in length, with a list of manufacturers that are 5 to 10 years out of date.
- If you determine the specification is outdated in any way, how can you be sure the rest of the specification is current in terms of all of the necessary requirements and allow the user to take advantage of state-of-the-art technology?
- Using preconfigured specification software certainly makes it easier to produce a specification for a fire and/or security system replacement project, but how many of them are actually customized specifically for your given project?
- Consider this: Where is the value for a building owner in such a general specification?



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Do you—the buyer—really own the final decision?

When the specifications allow for any company that manufactures fire and/or security system equipment to be considered as an acceptable manufacturer, it leaves the majority of the decision-making process in the hands of the electrical contractor or general contractor.

- Electrical contractors and general contractors come in all varieties in terms of experience and their approach to fire and/or security systems.
- Electrical contractors and general contractors that have more fire and/or security system experience go through their own process to determine the equipment they want to use and why.
- Factors impacting these decisions may include the ease of replacing the existing system with a particular brand of equipment in order to reuse some of the current devices, or even the existing wiring.
- Other factors may include evaluating the quality of the fire and/or security system distributor's equipment submittals and shop drawings and how they relate to how well the fire marshal plan review and approval process will go.
- Other considerations include the technical ability of the technicians employed by the fire and/or security system distributor, as well as the distributor's customer service philosophy and commitment. Of course, price will enter as a factor as well.



Some companies leave their decision-making processes in the hands of the electrical contractor and general contractor

Follow the money

Price oftentimes becomes the determining factor with electrical contractors and general contractors who don't see as much value in the distributor's commitment to quality fire and/or security system installation, technical expertise and focus on customer service.

In many cases, equipment decisions rest solely with the electrical contractors and general contractors based strictly on how much "buyout" they can obtain. "Buyout" is the amount for which the equipment and associated technical services can be purchased under the bid day budget. This money goes right into the pocket of the electrical contractors and general contractors, and the decision on what equipment is to be used is based entirely on who provided the most buyout money.

- Interestingly, total costs measured at project completion with a particular distributor may not even be considered.
- Often, the electrical contractor's primary focus is simply who is willing to cut the most from the project and sell it at the lowest possible price.
- When the decision by an electrical contractors and general contractors is based solely on how much buyout they can obtain, the building owner's concerns are not even a consideration.



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The responsibility is all yours

The building owner is responsible for their decision for the entire life of the system. They may end up with a system supported by a company where there are no options whatsoever for programming a proprietary system.

This can trap the owner into paying higher prices for equipment and parts, as well as for service, inspection, testing and maintenance.

The building owners or facilities managers who end up with the highest level of satisfaction at the conclusion of a fire and/or security system retrofit project typically take a more active role in determining what equipment is chosen for the project.

It pays to get involved.

- Owners may participate in a demonstration of the equipment, whether by utilizing a portable demonstration, attending a virtual demonstration or going out to see a system installed in another building.
- Owners can ask to see a list or photos of other similar projects, or contact other building owners to see how satisfied they are with their system a few years after the project has been completed.
- When checking references, owners should inquire about the service response times, technical ability of the technicians to address service or warranty-related issues, and the overall performance of the preventative maintenance program or testing, inspection and maintenance contract.



Contact other building owners to see how satisfied they are with their system

A competitive process that works harder for you

Some owners are under the mistaken impression that they have removed the competitive bid process by influencing the decision regarding equipment for their fire and/or security system retrofit project.

This is simply not true.

Considering, in most cases, the majority of the project costs are for the electrical contractor's materials and labor, it's imperative to select a partner that has specialized expertise in fire and/or security systems and will collaborate with you on the best solution for your particular business needs and budget.

Create a fair and competitive bid process.

A pre-qualified electrical contractor focused on fire and/or security system installation can competitively bid the project specifying the system selected or preferred by the building owner. This approach typically results in a fair and competitive bid process to satisfy those responsible for procurement policies, while also ensuring facilities managers obtain the features they need, with support from a qualified company to properly support and maintain the system. By relying on the experts in these critically important life safety systems, all key stakeholders will find success and come out as winners, knowing the proper steps have been taken to help protect the building, the people who use it and the company's bottom line.



By relying on our experts for these critically important life safety systems, everyone comes out a winner

Get exactly the system you want with the advice you need

Our Total Engineered Retrofit Managed Solution (TERMS) helps save lives, site disruption, failed inspections, compliance fines, construction delays, existing wiring, select legacy equipment—and yes, money.

terms[™]
Total Engineered Retrofit Managed Solution



ADT Commercial delivers industry-leading technology and solutions to the fire and life safety community through its dedicated National Fire and Life Safety Team.

Let's talk.

Reach out to your local ADT Commercial team for a consultation. We will schedule a time to explain how you can experience a retrofit using our proprietary process called TERMS. It can help you competitively bid your retrofit without compromising the long-term value and efficacy of your solutions.



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