

If you aspire to progress within the security industry, you will come across the term SeMS. TPSO asked the UK's leading experts, what this was all about? Andy Blackwell and John Wood of 3DAssurance have been delivering practical and strategic Security Management Systems (SeMS) for the past 5 years. Here they de-mystify the jargon and describe SeMS in practical terms. For more information go to www.3dassurance.com

What is SeMS and Why You Need to Know About It?

'A football lesson for security'



4-4-2 has been proven over the years as the most widely used and effective framework for football success. That same model works in security, without resorting to the management-speak beloved of Security Management Consultants.

The best football teams build from the back. The Back Four must be a rock-solid foundation to launch the attack; without that the defence is exposed and the midfield and strikers are cut adrift. At the other end of the pitch, the Strikers score the goals, provided they get the service from the backs and midfield.

But as everyone knows, the Midfield Generals are the creative force that drive the team forward and create the environment in which the Strikers can thrive. And finally, the manager or coach has the job of selecting and organising the team and tactics. He's ultimately accountable for the success of the team.

What's all this got to do with security?

4-4-2 is a system, not IT, not a magic wand, not a silver bullet: it's an organised method that everyone in the team understands, where everyone has a defined role and where they fit together into – there's only one word for it – 'the System'.

So when you hear management going on about the Security Management System or SeMS, they are actually talking 4-4-2.



The Back Four (“Foundation Processes”)

The Back Four are the foundations, the processes that make security run smoothly, things like incident response and resourcing. Without those the rest of the system is doomed to failure.

The Strikers (“Corporate Assurance”)

With all that going for them, the Strikers are free to do their thing, giving the organisation Corporate Assurance that security is good.

In security, the Strikers are (a) threat & risk management, and (b) performance monitoring. People's eyes usually glaze over at the mention of risk management but it's not as theoretical or complicated as the geeks would have you believe.

We all manage risks every day crossing the road, or overtaking a car. Have I got time to get across? is there room to overtake? what will I do if something comes the other way? etc, etc. Chances are you don't use a 5 x 5 matrix, you use your judgement.

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A Football Lesson for Security.... continued



In the SeMS, the threat & risk management component adopts the same approach. Decisions sometimes have to be quick, information is often incomplete, and judgement has to replace 'scientific analysis'. And unsurprisingly, we have found that experience and judgement give better results than arithmetic. Finally, why performance monitoring? If your last overtaking manoeuvre was a bit too close for comfort, you will learn from that and do better next time. Monitoring performance is not about blame or catching out mistakes, it's about doing better security in the future.

So to become the Barcelona of the security world (other teams are available) (I'm sure you mean Arsenal?..... Ed!) we advocate following the 4-4-2 model, aka SeMS.

Where does the front-line security officer fit in the 4-4-2 picture? He/she fills every position on the pitch. None of those components work without people – this is not an IT system, remember. The one position that management must fill is the 'Accountable Manager'. The overall design, the tactics and the deployment of people must all fit together. This is why successful teams have a Pep Guardiola and lesser teams have... (you will have a name in mind no doubt).

Like football, the front-line officers aren't just obeying orders, they are following the tactics but have to use their skill and judgement, minute by minute, to respond to constantly changing circumstances and events.

The Midfield Generals ("Culture & Accountability")

But the real driving force of security management is the Midfield Generals and later we will go into detail about the midfield's role in creating the right Culture and Accountability (Culture is just a fancy word for 'the way we do things round here', and accountability is everyone knowing, and buying into, what's expected of them).

Of course, the tactics, the players and the system must be right, but that's not the magic ingredient. It's leadership, it's culture properly baked in, and it's management 'walking the talk' showing that security matters: it's 'do as I do' not just 'do as I say' by managers right up to Board level. The benefit of this leadership shows in other areas too, like customer service or safety.



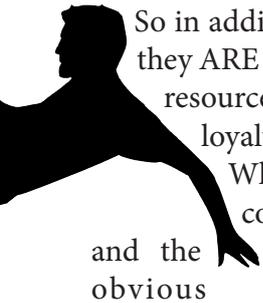
So the Accountable Manager must show a personal commitment to create the best possible SeMS, i.e. the team and tactics. He/she must ensure all necessary education & training is given and that everybody understands what is expected of them – their accountability and responsibilities. The final Midfield General is communication. The Accountable Manager must keep up the messaging that security is important, that the tactics are right, that he/she has complete faith in the whole squad and that top management is fully behind the team.

Nice theory, how do you make this happen in reality?

How does this happen in real life? How does the Accountable Manager build a success like Leicester City did? They built a common sense of purpose, and mutual trust and understanding of each other's roles, personal commitment from every player and leadership from the manager and above. The management speak for that is 'culture'.

The role of the Security Officer

The eagle-eyed reader may be worrying that we have not mentioned the goalkeeper. When the chips are down, when all else fails, the goalkeeper is the critical line of defence and in truth, all the outfield players are responsible for preventing attacks on the goal and to support the goalkeeper when an attack gets through. Even Harry Kane is tasked with disrupting attacks at their inception or tracking back to bolster the defence.



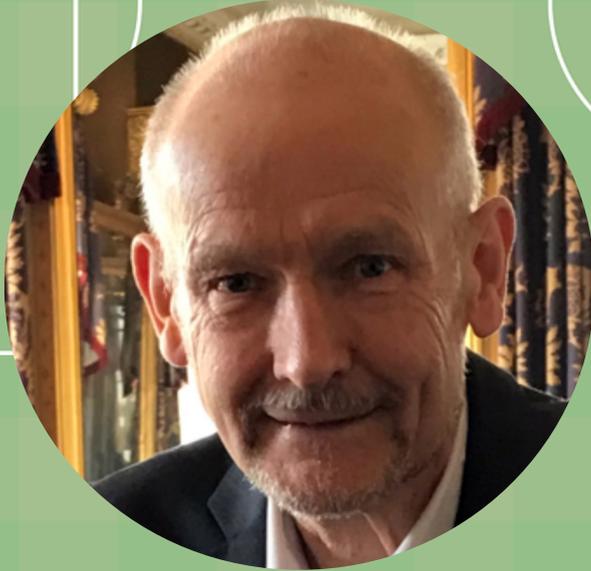
So in addition to being the lifeblood of every outfield role, front line security officers are the goalkeepers – they ARE the entire team, the SeMS. This is one of the reasons we advocate building the SeMS using existing resources, not parachuting in a new team of people. It’s the front-line team that has the knowledge, the loyalty and the skills to be a Barcelona. (Yeah whatever..... Ed!)

What happens if your organisation doesn’t have a Pep Guardiola? All is not lost, the front-line can commit themselves to 4-4-2, even if management is AWOL. They have the skills, the experience and the motivation to deliver the best possible security. The need for an Accountable Manager will become obvious and management will find somebody in the organisation who can take on that role.



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Andy is widely acknowledged as a SeMS and aviation security expert. As Head of Security at Virgin Atlantic, he was the first to implement the SeMS Framework. Now a leading SeMS exponent, Andy has authored numerous articles on SeMS and security, and speaks regularly at international security events.



John Wood.
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John was responsible at the UK CAA for developing the SeMS framework, working with and guiding many industry stakeholders. Experienced in design and implementation of effective strategic change in public and private sectors, John has been a lead designer of numerous governance, risk and compliance systems.

