

Hardening a Perimeter with Booths

A Case History

by Dave King



Whether you are looking to specify for a ticket kiosk to welcome visitors to the Bronx Zoo or to install a high-security guard booth to serve as the first line of defense between your thermonuclear facility and a terrorist threat, this small structure also defines the image of your facility. First impressions are important; so whether you want to welcome guests, sell tickets, or intimidate and deter criminals while allowing access to your personnel and vendors, a booth is the ideal place to start.

Bruce Palmer, a former law enforcement officer and Security Manager for Tanimura & Antle Produce in Salinas, CA, the largest independent lettuce grower and distributor in the United States, was concerned about food safety in the aftermath of 9-11...so was the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Homeland Security.



The Crop Protector

“Historically, security was outsourced. Owners noticed that their expectations were not being met even when they reviewed the performance and requested improvements from the contract security agency. We decided to go in-house for our security needs. That’s where I came in,” Palmer said.

Tanimura & Antle Produce kept the contractors on for two additional weeks to give themselves time to hire and train in-house staff that would be on the company’s security payroll. During this time, Palmer evaluated the overall security needs of the plants from entry points to working with three different federal agencies.

“We needed to establish a perimeter to control access to our plants,” he said. “We also wanted to keep out the potential terrorist who might try and contaminate our product. We identified the most vulnerable areas first.”

“We worked with the FDA and US Department of Agriculture to help set up voluntary standards for food security and safety through the Department of Homeland Security.”

Then Palmer looked at the control points—or entrance and exits—of the plant. “We needed a visible, established, focal deterrent effect. We found the gatehouse model we liked on the manufacturer’s Web site.”

Tanimura & Antle Produce has a history of continuous growth and careful expansion. They were in the market for a gatehouse that would be weather tight, attractive, and moveable—especially since they are planning to expand their facilities and may have to move the location of the booths at some point in the future.

Like most companies today, Tanimura & Antle Produce was looking for the most value for their dollar. Palmer was aware that if he misjudged the quality or cost for the gatehouses it would be a long time before he would have a chance to correct any mistake in judgment.

Palmer says his decision was primarily based on a gut feeling he had when speaking with the vendor, in addition to seeing an informative Web site and their larger selection as compared to the others he shopped. As a police officer who relied on his sixth sense, Palmer feels he is a good judge of character and behavior. “My decision to buy their product was confirmed and reconfirmed with every interaction I had with the company,” he said.

Palmer called the manufacturer to talk about options and requirements. Next, he received photographs and sample floor plans. Once Palmer decided on the booth styles he thought would work best, he called to place his order. The vendor asked if he wanted the color of the booth to match the colors of the main offices so sample paint chips were sent. But it was the next question from the vendor that impressed Palmer the most.

“We wanted the one at our main gate to match our corporate office in terms of quality and appearance but we were also budget minded. The rep asked and then suggested that we go with two different styles:

one, a more polished, corporate look for the main entrance and the other, a more utilitarian look for a separate delivery entrance. The simpler one offers the same amenities and functions but for about \$4,000 less. This arrangement worked out very well,” Palmer said, “and I had \$4,000 bucks to spend on other important security measures.”

This extra security was important to Tanimura & Antle Produce for several reasons. 1.) They were concerned about food safety on behalf of their distributors and the consuming public. 2.) They wanted to exceed security norms established by the FDA operating with authority from the Department of Homeland Security.

“Put these two reasons together and we just could not afford the risk of not having a secure physical plant.” Palmer continued, “Either way, we had to find a solution, and we had to find it fast.”

“The booth manufacturer really worked with us to get us squared away in no time at all,” Palmer said, “After 9-11, the Food Safety inspectors from the FDA were getting the heat turned up on them by the Department of Homeland Security—it went all the way to the top. We told the vendor getting our gatehouse was critical to the safety of our operations, and they got it here a week early!”

“We were able to shut down the road and control access to the plant, and that had been impossible before we had the guard booth. Our customers and growers are visually assured of the seriousness with which we take security. Several employees have commented that they feel safer just knowing the gate and the officer are in place.”

“The Guard House outperformed expectations. The structure was solid against the Salinas Valley winds and water tight against the unseasonable rain. The heater kept the gatehouse warm and the windows didn't fog. The tinting helped cut glare and reduced heat once the weather turned warm. It was well lit, highly visible, and with the large windows and two sets of doors, the security officer could work safely. The first impression many visitors had of the corporate headquarters was the professional looking gatehouse. Since the company is already exploring an expansion, I was able to assure the owners that the gatehouses could be easily moved and reset.”



The Titan

“The booth itself supports a stainless steel, electric toilet called an Incinolet™ which requires no plumbing or running water and allows us to easily move the booth if needed. The gatehouse also supports a Desktop PC, three radio chargers, a flash light charging stand, HVAC, a standard telephone, DSL line, bright interior and exterior light. The dimensions of the booth are such that three people can sit in armchairs and rotate up to the desk for training.”

“When the gatehouses came in,” he continued, “everybody from the Facilities Manager to the contractors commented that they were strong, tightly built, and better than anybody had expected in every way.”

“Protecting our customers was our A-number-one priority following 9-11. We wanted to be assured that we had everything buttoned-down and could affirm consumer confidence. I think we've succeeded too, based on the

positive press we've received in both our trade journal and in the local media. All of this is just the added benefit of having a top notch security detail that begins with our gatehouses.”

About the author:

As Vice President of B.I.G. Enterprises (www.bigbooth.com), Dave King has worked extensively with architects, contractors, government officials, ballistics engineers and suppliers to produce leading technology that has achieved high levels of blast resistance.

He has 25 years of experience in the pre-fab booth industry and is a recognized authority on parking, toll, info kiosk, and perimeter control/security/surveillance.



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