



CASE STUDIES

“SEEING AROUND CORNERS”, SEEING WHAT IS NOT OBVIOUS AND WHAT’S OVERLOOKED

1. At a military base the Corp of Engineers wanted to use an entry system where reservists, entering the base, would have to key in their PIN code in addition to using proximity cards. We calculated the time to do this multiplied by the number of reservists’ vehicles arriving for weekend duty and multiplied by the average length of a vehicle. We informed the Corp that their plan would result in a two mile traffic backup on a major road. We recommended alternate solutions.

2. At a chemical plant there was a high priority on having all visitors sign the sign-in book. A sheet of paper laying next to the sign-in book said that by signing the book the visitor accepted the terms and conditions written on the sheet, such as holding the company harmless for injuries, the requirement to not take photos, etc. We pointed out the logical (and legal) error. There was nothing on the book which said that the person signing had read or agreed to the terms on the sheet. The simple solution was to have the book boldly imprinted at the top of each page, stating that by signing the log book, the terms of the referenced, posted sheet were accepted, a copy of which was available upon request.

VISITORS MUST SIGN IN

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3. A large industry paid a guard every day for decades. A large sign said, "Visitors must stop at guard house." Yet observing the operation it was plain that most vehicles ignored the sign and drove right in and the guard did nothing. This is an example of observing the obvious. Yet it was overlooked by the company for decades.



4. At a prison, the perimeter fence was of high-security design meeting prison standards, namely buried into a two-foot deep concrete "ratwall" at the bottom, and the upper portion of the fence curved over and was made of "mini-mesh" which prevents climbing. The prison officials felt very secure. But the mistake was that ten feet outside the fence were dense woods. Any friend or confederate of an inmate could readily approach the fence and cut a hole in it, undetected at night, thus allowing the inmate to escape. The officials had not considered how easy it was to break in!



5. A power utility owned an abandoned pier along a river. They solicited bids pricing a carefully specified camera surveillance system but had nothing figured for lighting. Three major security vendors provided pricing with no mention of the need for illumination. The utility's focus was on preventing river boat pirates (—yes, they still exist!) from gaining access from the water side and dismantling equipment for salvage. They ultimately did not do this half million dollar security project. Yet they entirely overlooked a much more serious threat which was that children on motorbikes, approaching from the land side, routinely trespassed and biked around on the highly dangerous pier. This could have been solved for less than 4% of the cost of the wrong-priority bid. Getting the best bid on the wrong thing is of no value. Proper assessment of risks is crucial.



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