PERG’s annual general membership meeting on Tuesday, April 9th was well attended, with about 80 individuals from cities coast to coast, as well as rental companies from South Africa, Hong Kong, the U.K., France, the Netherlands, South America, and Canada. The topic for the evening was one of universal concern – equipment theft and security.

After attendees had a chance to relax and chat with peers, the meeting began by reviewing some recent data from the PERG Business Survey concerning theft. In our sample of 52 companies who participated in the survey, 49% had thefts since January 2011. A breakdown of the 100 incidents showed that a full 10% of them were a result of a break in to a facility while another 10% were fraudulent rental to steal equipment. A large number of thefts also were due to break-ins to locked vehicles (18%).

PERG’s council chair, Mark Wofford (PC&E, Atlanta) moderated the discussion, which included firsthand accounts of several professional robberies which occurred this past year. Debby Miller (Midtown Video, Miami), Simon Broad (ARRI CSC, New York) and Dennis McDonald (Keslow Camera, Los Angeles) spoke about the elements that thieves used to their advantage, and the steps that can be taken to lessen the risks. In one case, all of the stolen equipment was miraculously recovered, and the key reason for this was the quick response of individuals at the rental house to immediately put out the word to a large network of companies. As a direct result of this action, and a dose of good fortune, the stolen lenses were identified as soon as an attempt was made to sell them.

It is for exactly this reason that for many years PERG has been tracking missing equipment with a searchable online database, and providing push notifications to our members when new gear is reported to the list. At the NAB meeting Tom Fletcher (Fletcher Camera and Lenses, Chicago) described a new PERG initiative to involve equipment manufacturers, service centers, insurance companies and used equipment dealers worldwide to implement a simple serial number search of the database into their operations. This would vastly improve the effectiveness of the service in detecting and recovering stolen equipment.

Joe Fitzgerald, from Chubb Custom Market Insurance, headed up a discussion of insurance as it relates to equipment theft. He showed how
rental policy and procedure affect rates. He also shined a light on insurance exclusions to watch out for and avoid – such as a dishonesty exclusion that extends to persons leasing the covered property from the insured – and other important coverage considerations.

The key speaker for the meeting was Edward Norton, a certified protection professional with over 30 years experience in law enforcement and security. His firm, Norton Consulting and Investigations, has provided security analysis, oversight or investigation for a wide variety of clients including government, corporations, high-end retail, not-for-profit organizations, and private individuals. Ed’s resume includes developing the security and counter terrorism plans for five major USAF installations. Ed spoke about various strategies for hardening facilities, but his main emphasis was on holistic thinking about security. There are a wide variety of ways in which companies may make themselves less vulnerable aside from physical security, such as their employee hiring policies and point of sale procedures.

One of the take-aways from Ed’s presentation was the importance of truly considering how a security plan is going to actually provide the desired result. Don’t rely on the people that sell security cameras or burglar alarms to help you develop a comprehensive security plan. Their goal is to sell equipment. Ed stressed the value of hiring a security consultant who will help you develop your plan and select security vendors and equipment. He recommended going to asionline.org to find a reputable security consultant near you. ASIS International is the preeminent organization for security professionals worldwide. Ed also told the group that most police departments have a crime prevention specialist who will, normally at no charge, do a survey of your business and provide a report with recommendations.

Another theme of Norton’s presentation was simply the need to take charge and address the clear threat that is posed to valuable camera assets. Professional thieves are aggressively targeting camera rental companies. As one individual attending the meeting put it, you have budgeted for your $20,000 insurance deductible (for example), you could take that money and apply it to avoiding the losses in the first place. Watch for more information in an article by Ed Norton in an upcoming issue of Protocol.

The meeting was sponsored by:
Security Precautions

Specific security pointers raised in the discussion by the speakers and by members of the audience:

- Create layers that delay burglars. Criminals succeed if they can be in and out in 7 or 8 minutes.
- Store the most valuable assets in a safe, inside a locked room every night.
- Keep assets in several different locations, lenses locked in a separate space from camera bodies, for example. This creates delay, and makes it much harder to clean out everything.
- Thieves carefully case the premises, in some cases posing as customers, or by breaking in on a dry run. Use security cameras as a deterrent, placing them where anyone entering the facility or signing out a rental will clearly see that they have been caught on camera.
- Make your facility as unattractive a prospect as possible. Make a burglary more risky for the criminal.
- Do not let customers and visitors examine your storage arrangements.
- Thieves often ram metal rollup doors using a vehicle. Bollards (posts) either inside or outside will stop a vehicle penetrating the door. Upgrade to a heavy metal door.
- Use a deafeningly loud alarm system.
- Hire an experienced security consultant who represents your interests before installing an alarm system or video surveillance system.

2013 PERG Business Survey Results

The PERG 2013 Business survey has been tallied and a link to the results will be e-mailed to all PERG members and participants within the next few days. This year’s survey covered a lot of ground and generated some very interesting data. Topics include: security, data backup, employees health insurance and benefits, the origin of fruitful business leads, marketing with social media, purchase decisions, business indicators for 2012, expectations for 2013, and customer trends.

Up Next

PERG will be holding our annual Cine Gear event at a different location this year. As usual we are planning the event for the eve of Cine Gear, May 30, but this year it will be held in Hollywood. The topic: everything you ever wanted to know about social media but couldn’t fit into 140 characters; how rental companies use social media most effectively. We will be e-mailing invitations soon. Please contact Harry if you have any questions, harry.box@plasa.org.

Branding

Being a member means your company holds the highest standard for gear and service. Find a place on your website to show clients that your company is a PLASA PERG member. The logo can be downloaded from the members area of the website, found at: http://na.plasa.org/perg
Don’t forget about these resources!

• Missing Equipment List
• Job Board
• Data Security Documents
• Friend Us at Facebook.com/PERG.PLASA
• Business Resources

Members Area

Check out all the benefits and services that are available to your company by logging in to the MEMBERS AREA: www.plasa.org

If you don’t know your password, click on “Lost your password” and enter your email address then answer the prompt question with “resend”.

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