

Dedicated Account Manager Coordinates Security for 15 Credit Union Locations in El Paso

GECU

Situation: For more than 75 years, GECU, an El Paso, TX, credit union, has served its members and developed into El Paso's largest locally owned financial institution with more than \$1.2 billion in deposits and \$1.4 billion in assets. As it continues to grow with 15 locations, including branches and new satellite centers in local schools, GECU holds true to its mission statement -- people helping people.

GECU has more than 281,000 members utilizing excellent checking rates, savings and retirement plans, home and vehicle loans, low service fees and financial education.

Challenge: There are many challenges to protecting a financial services firm. Growing institutions like GECU need coordinated security across multiple sites. GECU assists hundreds of members daily at each service center, and they are committed to protecting their members' assets. Financial institutions have visible monetary activity, making them susceptible to unwanted attention. In many cases, security officers are the initial deterrent and first line of defense, so they must be highly trained, prepared for emergencies and ready at a moment's notice. When GECU looked to enhance its security program, their goal was to create a professional, highly-skilled, visible presence at each location, giving credit union members, employees and the community a feeling of safety and security.

Another security challenge GECU faced was the recent addition of satellite branches located in El Paso high schools, and operated by the students. The new security provider had to consider the mix of student safety and security along with the security of GECU members and employees, and their financial assets.

Solution: GECU Risk Management Manager Maria Guerrero was looking for a seamless security program across all GECU sites. She was looking for a dedicated team, a go-to person and someone who could manage the security officers while she focused on the larger security picture and other responsibilities.

"We were very impressed with the presentation that Allied Universal gave," said Guerrero. "Their commitment to training practices and customer service, and the professionalism they portrayed was exactly what we were looking for. They met all of our requirements and were very member-oriented."

Allied Universal, who joined the GECU team in May 2007, suggested establishing an account manager, dedicated solely to the GECU account, who would put together a committed team and would be Guerrero's go-to person. The account manager would serve as the main point of contact for all security matters and would facilitate open lines of communication across each branch, its employees, security officers and GECU senior management.

Allied Universal knew the skills and reliability they brought to the table would be the positive change that GECU was looking for in a security program. Under the direction

Location:

El Paso, TX

Statistics:

- > Locally owned
- > Largest financial institution in El Paso
- > 15 service centers
- > Dedicated security team integrated with GECU staff



of the Allied Universal account manager, the security team took action in turning the program around.

“We knew that in order to create a successful program, in response to these challenges, we had to develop a positive relationship and partnership with the GECU management and its members,” said Raul de Leon, District Manager, Allied Universal. “Each branch and satellite has a manager on-site that we communicate with daily. In addition, it is important to follow consistent security practices across all locations and share information with all managers. GECU has an open door policy, and we are an integral part of their team.”

GECU looked to Allied Universal and their best practices for quality new employee and on-going training programs for the security officers. In high-profile facilities, it is important that security teams are well trained and participate in refresher courses and continuous training.

“We were able to show them the value of a dedicated account manager and the proactive role they would play in the total security program,” De Leon added. “They are responsible for the account, the training of our officers and relaying important information to GECU management.”

Hiring the right security officers was also part of the solution. The account manager became involved in the security officer recruiting process. With a financial client like GECU, it takes a certain officer to handle the daily tasks of a high profile, high-traffic facility. The account manager knows the account best and uses the support of Allied Universal’s national resources to assist in creating the ideal security team.

“We have created a program that works. The account manager has developed a good-quality team of officers who are just as dedicated to this account as he is,” said De Leon. “We utilize Allied Universal’s training programs to stay a step ahead.”

“Establishing an account manager was such a relief for us,” said Guerrero. “He responds to our every need. If there is extra security required for an event, I know that the account manager has the additional resources to quickly respond.”

Results: This highly trained team, which has earned the respect of the GECU managers and risk management group, has taken on a lot of responsibility. Each morning the account manager and his team complete a security check of the buildings before the GECU staff enters, adding an extra layer of safety and security for employees and members. The Allied Universal security officers monitor the lobby in each service center, managing access control and alarm response.

To continue building their relationship and enhance collaboration and communication, the local Allied Universal team sits down with GECU senior management each quarter. At these meetings, branch managers can address security issues, and Allied Universal is able make modifications to the program.

“Our quarterly meeting is a great way to get everyone on the same page,” said Guerrero. “All of our branch managers are aware of the issues facing different offices, and can take proactive measures at their site.”

Guerrero considers Allied Universal “Best in Class in El Paso,” due to her confidence in the account manager and his team’s knowledge and commitment to GECU.

Because the security officers are so carefully recruited and selected, the account manager knows his officers are the right fit. “We have a unique combination,” said De Leon. “The satellite locations in schools combine a financial institution with students. Our teams are focused on the needs of a financial setting but also sensitive to the security concerns of students and parents.”

“Allied Universal went above and beyond our expectations,” said Guerrero. “I have confidence that these officers are prepared to meet any unexpected challenges. The Allied Universal team has brought a positive change and a whole new level of respect to our security program. The dedicated account manager was the right choice for GECU.”

As GECU continues to expand through multiple service centers and branches, their more than 710 employees have confidence in the Allied Universal security team to ensure safety and security at all locations.

“We have received positive feedback from our members,” Guerrero continued. “Allied Universal’s professional image and physical presence makes our members feel safe.”