

Twelve Questions to Ask Before Specifying a Guard Booth

A white paper by Dave King of B.I.G. Enterprises

This white paper is about:

Establishing the first line of defense between a facility and a threat on its perimeter, the guard station can also define the image of a facility. Here are twelve questions to ask before specifying a guard booth.

The author of this white paper:

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.

Key Question #1

What is the real purpose for your booth?

How will your booth be used both by its occupant(s) and by your consumers / visitors? The possibilities and variables here will impact the construction and options included in your booth's manufacture.

For instance: what equipment will be mounted in and on the booth such as cameras, monitors, data and communication equipment, water coolers, refrigerator, cabinets, shelves, a toilet and sink?

A contract negotiator and buyer for JPL / Caltech / NASA's facilities said, "If there was a particular attack—particularly with a car bomb—this is one of the reasons that we bought the guard booths. Preventing and checking access to our facility was something that the guard booths are able to accomplish as a relatively low-tech solution. Preventing localized access—car and suicide bombers or gunmen—for this reason they serve their purpose well.

Key Question #2

What are the environmental impact considerations?

You will need to determine how this structure will impact the world around it and how the world around your structure will interact with your booth.

Is the booth in the middle of the lane or over to one side? By knowing this, the booth size can be determined, as well as the overhang size. Remember, overhangs are dangerous in applications where the booth is beside a drive lane. You will want to incorporate your booth seamlessly into its new environment so that it will not cause new problems while solving others.

Key Question #3

What are the security (both inside and outside) considerations?

Is the booth in a secure location? Will its occupants be exposed to danger? Do you need to consider bullet resistant or even radiation

protective fabrication of the building? Will the booth need to incorporate traffic calming (military-standard barricade) controls? Will additional barricades be required to protect the booth and its inhabitants?

One former Marine with the rank of Sergeant of the Guard, was given the responsibility of protecting the Marine Corp Commandant and his family, whose residence is part of the USMC compound in Washington, DC and who was later promoted to a special detail at Camp David, offered the following thoughts on guard booths.

"You could look at a booth as a huge overall savings on your security budget. It is the difference between having to pay one person

or an entire force. One person can provide security for hundreds of people depending upon their environment. Couple that with surveillance technology and you've just increased their vision; their eyes can be in many places at once. Link them by phone and radio to a back-up force and you have an on-call army. Basically, the booth protects the guard and empowers him to know what is happening within a larger perimeter and allows the most rational judgments on the protection of the people and buildings under his watch."

JPL NASA administrators felt that security was the number one concern. Because there are 5,000+ government employees, sensitive material—some of it military—JPL sees itself as an icon of sorts and the kind of target the federal government has cautioned might be a probable target for terrorism—not to mention the odd sociopath carrying an automatic weapon.



The "Custom Guard Booth"

Key Question #4

What will your neighbors say and what will the booth say about your company?

Architectural style is your next discussion point. Make sure that the style of unit that you desire can be constructed in the size that you need it. If you are contemplating an installation on an historic property, you should be aware of The Department of the Interior's Historic Preservation guidelines, and any other prohibition of modern structures on such property. Be aware that if proper channels are not followed and the required permits not obtained, regulators could be within rights to have the structure dismantled and removed.

(Ohio) Hamilton County Park District decided they wanted a more rustic look to the exterior of the booth to blend in with the park. Today, pre-fab manufacturers offer many different kinds of looks to complement their surroundings.



The "Deluxe Half Round"

to be discerning. It's always a good idea to contact a company that has been in this specific industry for at least 15 years.

Key Question #7

Should you spec pre-fab or stationary traditional construction?

Aside from the usual 25% to 75% cost savings of pre-fab over traditional construction, have your CFO investigate the tax advantages of mobile booths. Because many booths can be simply moved in one piece, they are classified as "tangible property" of your company.

As a result, the purchase price can be depreciated over seven years. Conventional construction, on the other hand, becomes a permanent addition to the building and is classified as "real property" with a 39-year depreciable life. This difference in depreciation significantly reduces your total project cost and considerably improves your bottom line.

Key Question #5

Will this be an environment conducive to work?

Consider the operation or task to be executed inside the booth. Operation affects the external access layout of booth. Will it be used as a drive-up checkpoint, walk-up, or both? Will deliveries (in large trucks) be checked through this station? This will help to determine door location, eave overhang size, and slide window location to enhance employee productivity and speed operations.

For the best staff productivity, consider the task flow and movement of the guards or attendants so that your booth manufacturer can provide the most ergonomically friendly layout. Make sure that your booth builder understands ADA requirements so that your booth is compliant to this important regulation.

Marty Hoeffel, Principle of Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona worked for five years to find a solution for his guard booths. "On an interpersonal level, it is tough to always be nice when it is 110° in the booth," he said. "You are stranded for a four-hour shift on small concrete island in a sea of asphalt. Now our employees have a better working environment and as a result, are more pleasant and look forward to coming to work. Not only are they our first line of defense, but they are also providing our guests with their first experience of hospitality. This certainly helps them do their jobs."

Key Question #6

How do you locate a booth manufacturer?

Because there are many booth manufacturers in the marketplace (A recent Google search turned up 200!), and plenty of design firms willing to charge you while they reinvent the wheel, it is important

Key Question #8

How accommodating / knowledgeable is the manufacturer?

When you call, do you receive knowledgeable advice from an expert? Does the firm interview you to truly learn your needs and make suggestions on features you hadn't considered that will be helpful to you? Do they offer solutions for you that save you money without sacrificing quality?

Key Question #9

What do their current and past customers think?

Would they hire them again? Are their references and the kinds of customers that they have done work for varied? Can you visit their booths at an installed site near you?

Key Question #10

Can they accommodate custom work and design build?

Make sure that they can accommodate truly custom work—which means actually following your specifications—you don't want to be surprised.

DWL Architectural Firm in Arizona has been recommending pre-fab structures to its clients for over 10 years. Most recently they recommended three to Alhambra High School in the final days of a multi-million dollar project when money was running out for sticks and bricks and the principle wanted to squeeze a state-of-the-art security booth for the main entrance, a ticket kiosk and sky box for the athletic center with what little he had left. Pre-fab allowed them to do it.

DWL's philosophy states, "It is the architect's obligation to make the most appropriate use of the resources available for the task." Navin Pathangay, Job Captain at DWL, followed that up saying, "Metal is not a hard science, but it is an exact one. Most fabricators don't do what you ask. Instead, they do it the way that they've been doing it for 30 years. Luckily, we found one that does and we use them pretty much all the time. It's nice to see exactly what you draw, actually come to life. It's an architect's dream."

Pathangay recommends that any design-build relationship have three distinct phases: Pre-design, Pre-construction, and Post-occupancy. "We are interested in spending the time to make sure each of these is healthy in the development of a client-user-firm relationship," he said. "Of these, the post-occupancy review gives us an opportunity to improve on our work and take note of the things that really work well for the future. This is the key thing that sets a great architectural firm apart from a poor one....stepping back and looking at your work and learning from it."

The ability to change the manufacturing design to fit the customer's needs is based on an ability and willingness to follow architectural design with a deep understanding of the product, materials and technology currently available, and to build it with quality workmanship. Another mark of good service is product availability and how that matches up with delivery scheduling and flexibility.

"You would expect an architect to have a thorough knowledge of building code requirements on local, state, and federal levels," Pathangay said, "and the contractor to have the licensure to install it. It is doubly impressive when the booth manufacturer does, too."

Key Question #11

Do they offer follow-through and a warranty for their workmanship?

Will the manufacture guarantee their work? Will they be there to make adjustments after the installation should there be a need?

Kline recalls, "We also learned a good lesson about proper ventilation. There were no vents in the roof and this caused condensation to form and leak into the booth; not to mention the increased temperature inside the booth. We went back to the manufacturer and they sent complimentary retrofitted roof vents that were easily installed. They realized they should have accounted for that, so it was something they were willing to fix for us."

Key Question #12

From Specs to POs—Do they offer firm pricing and guarantee it for at least six months?

The Manufacturer should be interested in competing for your business and be eager to submit a response to a Request for Proposal in

the case of a private client. In the case of a government agency, you will want to work with a manufacturer who is knowledgeable about and has a current contract with the General Services Administration. This ensures that any price schedules and bids submitted to the Federal Government or other approved government agency are the lowest possible price and that the manufacturer is already approved to provide your agency with a pre-fabricated structure.

However, as a NASA JPL buyer pointed out, "I looked up the GSA contractors first. It turned out that the GSA manufacturer was more expensive than what I could find on my own. This is actually not so terribly unusual. We put out a Request for

Quotation and ended up going with an independent supplier who we'd used before on other local jobs."

After all of the above items have been determined, and you have submitted your specs, the manufacturer should offer firm pricing that is guaranteed for at least six months, along with additional pricing for any options and designs required by the customer. All prices should include a firm freight cost, power and foundation requirements, as well as weight and installation instructions.

(Arizona) Alhambra High's Principle Hoeffel summed it up: There's pretty much only two ways to build out here: 'stick and stucco' or 'brick and block.' When you can't afford either of those but still need a safe structure without sacrificing quality, looks and utility, pre-fab steel is the way to go. It met all our needs in a fraction of the time and toll that traditional construction would have taken. I am sold and have been converted."



The "Crop Protector"

Questions About This White Paper? Want to request the B.I.G. 138 page full-color hard-copy catalog which features lots of booth ideas and helpful insights to protect and enhance your facility?

If you have questions or if you would like this catalog mailed to you, please send your name, company and mailing address to dking@bigbooth.com and Mr. King will see that you get a copy or respond to your question right away.



B.I.G. Enterprises, Inc.™

9702 East Rush Street
South El Monte, CA 91733-1730
Tel: 626.448.1449 • Fax: 626.448.3598
Toll Free: 800.669.1449
Email: inquiries@bigbooth.com
www.bigbooth.com