

# what's the big idea?

WITH RON DAVIS

## Molding Tomorrow's Leaders

### IDEA OF THE MONTH...

If you had just one really great idea you could share with the alarm industry, what would it be?

*This month's great idea is from MEL MAHLER, president of Nashville, Tenn.-based ADS Security. Mahler is not only the founder of ADS, but within the past 10 years, he has become the president of the Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA) and was recently named First Alert's dealer of the year.*

#### MAHLER'S GREAT IDEA IS:

"I think the secret to being successful in business is reflected by the team that you assemble around you. It's the quality of the people you hire. In this business, or any business, the right team is a pretty good indicator of how successful you're going to be. Be willing to assemble a good team, empower them to get things done and celebrate with them in their victories."

What amazing insight Mahler has in running a company; it is a reflection of his leadership. It has been said that leadership does not filter up from the bottom, but rather it begins at the top. In the case of running an alarm company, the top can consist of several individuals, all of whom have taken on a leadership role within the company. How do you find the right leadership? How do you train them? How do you manage them? By following the advice from Mahler, we will explore these questions.

#### Finding Good Managers

In the years that I've been in the alarm industry, I have seen two phenomena that are strikingly similar. The first is how alarm dealers will ordinarily settle on a product line with less thought than they might put in to buying a new car. Fortunately, most of the product lines dealers settle on are well known and reputable. However, alarm dealers also seem to select managers in exactly the same way,

spending insubstantial amounts of time in the selection process.

One of your primary goals as a manager should be having the ability to replace your role in the company in the case of an emergency or in the ordinary course of business. This is essential to the future of your business.

#### Training Your Leaders

Once you have found good managers, you must train them, keeping in mind the old "train the trainer" philosophy. It is not an easy task in finding a new manager and training them properly so that they can eventually function as the chief executive of a department or organization. But it has to be accomplished in order to reach success.

One of the most difficult things for management is allowing their replacements to study the industry. Have your new management go to trade shows, conventions, association meetings and educational forums. Let your people get involved. If you're doing the job right, they will come back better informed and better able to handle the day-to-day decisions inherent in leadership roles.

#### Supervising Your Managers

Finally, how do you manage your future leadership? Well, it's kind of a



**Mel Mahler, president of Nashville, Tenn.-based ADS Security, shares his "big idea" on finding and training future leaders for your company.**



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trick question because you don't really manage them. Do you guide them? Of course. Help them set goals? Absolutely. Let them find their own way? Most definitely.

It seems a lot of the old-fashioned managers feel the best way to manage a new replacement is to have that replacement watch what their superior does, says and thinks, and then replicate him or her. If that's what happens, it couldn't be more detrimental to the growth of the business. While a new manager may pick up a lot of the right things from a superior, he or she will, in all likelihood, pick up many of the things that are done incorrectly, too. There needs to be a fresh eye to promote the growth of the business.

If the goals are set and established, agreed upon by all parties and implemented — in other words, you manage by objectives and you set benchmarks for the accomplishments of those objectives — by definition you are a good manager, trainer and executive.

Replacing yourself is not the most important function in running a business; frankly, it's the only function. No one doubts that someone who has built a business from scratch can't continue to manage it. The trick is finding quality people who can take the dream and build it into a newer, bigger and hopefully better dream — one that your replacement has in mind for your company.

Jump in, get involved and enjoy the success that is sure to be yours! ■