

THE PROTECTION BUREAU



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Women in Security: The Protection Bureau, 40+ years and going strong - SVP Karen Baker helps sustain family-run business

By: Paul Ragusa-Excerpt from Tuesday, November 29, 2016

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EXTON, Pa.-The Protection Bureau, a national security integration company based here, is a family-run business with more than 40 years of success serving both the residential and commercial security markets.

Founded in 1975 by Keith Ladd, who passed away in 2009 at age 74, the company is now led by his son J. Matthew Ladd, president and CEO, and daughter, Karen Baker, SVP, who together continue to take the company to new heights.

The Protection Bureau, which has approximately 95 employees and provides security for more than 5,000 customers across the U.S., is closing in on \$16 million in annual revenue, up from \$15 million in 2015, according to Baker, who remembers the company from the early days.

"My dad started the company and it was very small-just him and a technician," Baker tells Security Systems News. "I first started in 1981, as my father was doing everything and needed some help in the office, which at the time the company was run out of my parent's house, so it really was a family affair."

Although Baker started off doing office work, she quickly moved into the technical side of the business in a big way. "The first system that I programmed was a Picture Perfect system with 782 readers for the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine," she explained. "That is how I cut my teeth on actually being able to program the system. My position evolved and I would do the database work, which included meeting with prospects to demo the system, setup and program the access systems, training the customer and offering support after the sale."

She continued, "I would do a lot of demos for the sales people, as I knew the software because I was the one who programmed it. And because I was not a field technician, I would look at the systems the way our customers were going to use them, and that was very successful for us."

As one of the owners, Baker's role today isn't as hands-on as it once was.

"We built on that model that we started with and now we have a database department that we can spend more time getting into what the customer needs, talking with sales, the technician and the customer to develop the program before it is actually installed," she said. As a woman in security for more than 30 years, Baker has a unique perspective on how far women have come in the industry.

"There is definitely a ways to go because there is still a long history of this being a man's industry," she said. "But it has changed because you actually do see women at functions and events and trade shows and talk to them in the industry, whereas when I started out there just weren't many women in the industry at all."

Baker is excited to see women in many more roles within the industry. "I am seeing in the industry now women who own businesses, but like anything else it is going to take some time to become more balanced in regard to men. As more women get into the industry-we just hired a female technician and while she is not our first, they are a rarity out there-it is really neat to see women getting involved in the industry in these different capacities."

As the industry evolves and becomes more technology focused, Baker said the challenge is to stay on top of the latest trends and advancements while sustaining the solid growth the company continues to experience.

"We are looking for steady growth and to make sure that we have everything in place to maintain and support that growth," she explained. "We want to make sure that any growth that we have is healthy growth, not just a blip for one year. So we need to keep building the technical side, and even after 40 years we continually look at best practices and ask, 'Is this still the best way to do things in relation to our customers, our employees and the company overall?'"

About The Protection Bureau

The Protection Bureau provides electronic security solutions such as card access, digital video surveillance, central station monitoring, fire and intrusion detection systems. Founded in 1975, the company is family owned and operated and is the tenth largest security integrator in the Mid-Atlantic Region, headquartered in Exton, PA. The Protection Bureau is a Security-Net company.

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