

Samsic UK aims for job satisfaction in security

2 years ago



Facilities management specialist [Samsic UK](#) is helping to redefine the role of security operative through training, innovation and care.

The traditional view of the ‘night watchman’ – a lone operative sat in a cabin all night with little but a torch to keep them company – may seem like a stereotype from television and film, but that stereotype was based on truth.

As recently as the 1990s working conditions in the security industry were poor and often dangerous, with extremely long hours and few opportunities for progression or fulfilment.

[Samsic UK](#), which offers a variety of security and cleaning services as its core business, has been working hard to transform both the perception and the reality of the role.

Andrew Hallam, managing director for the security division at Samsic, has been helping to lead that change. His viewpoint is better than most, having started his career at the bottom and worked his way up through positions at various companies, from on-the-ground operative to supervisor, manager and eventually director.

He remembers the day-to-day job of the security operative as ‘Dickensian’.

Andrew said: “Security was a deregulated industry, with no standards to adhere to, and working conditions were extremely immature. My first week was a real eye-opener. One of the first locations I went to, a security officer was warming his hands over an oil drum full of burning wood.

"You had people providing the service from a caravan on a site, with little in terms of facilities. There was no provision of heat and water, and no telephone.

"People were working long hours, it wasn't uncommon to see people doing 24 hour shifts. People would sit on a client premises just in their car all night.

There wasn't a lot of job satisfaction either. It was a very primitive service line operated and managed by poor quality management."

Thankfully things have changed for the better. Andrew highlights the introduction of the Private Security Act 2001 as a major catalyst for change, bringing in licensing and criminal record checks, and leading to a streamlining of the industry.

Technology has also advanced significantly, and Samsic is innovating wherever possible to help staff do their jobs better and more safely.

Andrew said: "Back in the day a security operative would be sitting there making sure no-one broke in. These days technology can protect a property, meaning that security staff do much more people-facing work."

From a recruitment perspective, however, there is still a concern that the perception of the job is putting off potential applicants.

Andrew and the team at Samsic are keen to emphasise the job satisfaction and potential for progression that the industry now offers.

He said: "It's not uncommon now that there are a wider range of services that a security officer would deliver. Years ago it was just a case of sitting in a building on guard all night. As technology has replaced this part of the job, the operative's activities became a lot more tangible and the array of services has broadened.

"Our staff carry out front of house services, reception, concierge, guard, meet and greet, post-room services, fire warden, health and safety, testing and much more.

"We look for people who are multi-skilled, proactive with a can-do attitude, who are smart in appearance and ideally have a good command of English. Our security operatives need to create a good positive experience for the client, being the first point of contact. The job today is far more focused on communication, attention to detail and diligence."

Training and progression are important aspects of the modern security role, and Samsic is making constant improvements to its learning management system (LMS) to encourage staff to move up in their careers.

Staff are encouraged to take advantage of around 80 different 'toolbox talks' on a wide variety of topics. Teams can also do off-the-shelf courses on subjects ranging from first aid, to customer service, to hazardous chemicals.

Clients also have a specific learning pathway for each of their sites, so that all operatives are trained in the same way.

But perhaps most important is creating an atmosphere where people want to come to work, and where job satisfaction is high.

Andrew said: “Samsic is a family-run business with a strong culture, an ethical approach to how it does business, with employee engagement at the forefront of everything it does.

“We’ve done a lot around wellbeing, which is key to us. We’ve introduced a number of initiatives to help staff, such as Wagestream, which enables them to access their salaries in real time rather than waiting until the end of the month.

“We offer our MySamsic rewards scheme, and we’ve got rid of zero hour contracts to give job security. We also run our own ‘Oscars’ which highlights the great work of our team.”

Building a career in security

Shahbaz Khan is a Samsic UK success story. Having worked in various roles including sales and driving, he started with the company in 2020 as a security officer and quickly progressed to become a control room resource planner, responsible for over 70 sites and around 400 staff.

He said: “I remember it was a bit daunting going through the interview. The ops manager was very straightforward though, and gave me the assurances I needed. The contract was permanent, and ensuring I had the hours and steady income was important.

“They also explained the site and the role, and promised an initial two days’ training.”

Shahbaz adapted well and developed a positive relationship with his first client, leaning on his previous customer-facing experience. He also used his initiative to improve the service his employer was providing.

He said: “It was a new contract, and I noticed certain areas that needed improvement. After speaking to people on site I was able pick out certain vulnerabilities where we could help. It felt like more was needed and I thought that by being a supervisor on site, I could speak to both the guard and the client.”

The ops manager was keen on the idea and Shahbaz was promoted to supervisor. With support, training and goal setting, it then took just a year to progress to control room and resource planner.

Shahbaz said: “I was always keen to progress. The role came up and the ops manager recommended me. They were very clear on the stresses of the role. They talked me through everything and gave me reassurance.

“In this job I’m always looking at ways to streamline. You never have a quiet day, it’s always busy – everything from responding to incidents on site, handover reports from shifts, dealing with absences – and I’m always speaking with the majority of the guards.

“We are always innovating and using new technologies. During general patrols we have devices on our phones to log incidents, so we have a lot of data-driven information. The ops managers then discuss the data and clients can see it coming through. When an incident occurs clients are immediately informed.”

Job security was a priority for Shahbaz when first starting at Samsic, and he is a big advocate for the way that the company looks after its staff.

He said: "From my perspective, I work with my team to find shifts that will meet their needs. Some sites can be very demanding and we work to find suitable roles.

"Because we are not a huge company, you are not just a number. We are like a family and we look after employees. Things like mental health support, rewards and internal awards, give you a real boost. Recognition is really important.

"You see people progress, you are always given the option and the support. And it's also really good to get positive and constructive appraisal from clients."

And the Oscar goes to...

To highlight the work of its staff, Samsic has introduced a monthly 'Oscars' award system, with bronze, silver and gold awards. Any member of staff is eligible, and nominations are considered by the management team each month.

Each tier has a set reward, with gold winners receiving a framed certificate and a £50 voucher.

A recent gold award went to a security officer carrying out a mobile patrol on a building housing vulnerable adults. The officer discovered blood and broken spectacles at the bottom of a stairwell, and took it upon himself to knock on every door in the unit.

Once he found the affected resident he took her to the hospital. The resident had fallen and would not have been seen for several days without his intervention.