

Q&A

ASIAL BOARD MEMBER, RACHAELL SAUNDERS

Natalie Shymko, ASIAL's Marketing and Communications Manager talks to our Board Member, Rachael Saunders.

Natalie: Rachael please begin by telling us a little about yourself.

Rachael: I started doing security work as a way to pay the bills when I was 18, initially in guard and patrol work. Security wasn't something I wanted to do, it was simply a job that was going to be short-term. I have stayed in the industry because I really enjoy it. It certainly has its challenges but I would not change a thing about my career.

I am a lifelong learner and apart from various qualifications, I have degrees in Marketing and International Business. On a study tour to the US around 2000, I met Jeff Bezos (Amazon). One of the things that struck me about him was his vision for Amazon and his ability to remain focused even when his business was very difficult with challenges coming at him from many directions. Amazon is now coming to Australia and I think back to Jeff in his office with second-hand furniture and phone books propping up his computer monitor. He was not concerned about the financial media in their lavish offices on large salaries who time and time again had written about the demise of his company. I have understood during my journey running National Protective Services that there are times when it can be difficult, when it can be challenging - that is business, that is life, what's important is to remember the WHY.



I live in Melbourne and on my downtime I cherish spending quiet time with my family, cooking, exercising and of course, going to a NRL Melbourne Storm game.

Natalie: What changes have you seen in the security industry?

Rachael: When I started in the industry virtually every building was patrolled with a patrol officer guarding doors and gates, even corner milkbars. With improvements in technology and increases in labour costs, patrol services are more often used to respond to alarm activations than patrol. Patrols certainly still have their place and are useful for sites that need to be locked/unlocked where a security presence is needed and where the site needs to be physically checked. We patrol many sites where an alarm or CCTV does not substitute for a patrol officer attending the building and physically providing a security service. Now however, patrols are considered just one aspect of the many physical security measures that can be deployed and not the only option.

The security systems that we are installing for our clients are no longer simply the basic alarm systems. The technology is rapidly advancing and it is exciting

to see the developments changing the security landscape. We just completed several national programs where the CCTV systems, although useful for security, were also used to track customer buying behaviour. These systems are now commonplace and demonstrate how security is being integrated into the business practices of our clients.

Technology has improved the way we conduct our business as well. In the manpower side

of the business we have brought into Australia security reporting equipment that tracks our staff and provides live reporting functionality for our clients. This allows clients to see where security officers are at any time and can receive video footage of any incidents. For clients, it brings transparency to the service that we provide and it empowers them around their security.

Every year I usually head overseas to some of the larger security conferences and the rate of change in technology is astounding. Due to current threats around the world, there is a lot of money being invested in the security industry and the new products coming out reflects that. I often wonder in five years' time how different our industry will be.

Natalie: What is the biggest challenge/opportunity facing the security industry over the next five years?

Rachael: Both a challenge and an opportunity is in meeting the changing needs of our clients. We need to be able to shift and adjust our services to provide security in an increasingly broad area. Security is not just about physical security programs, it also encompasses cyber, information, IT. The industry needs to understand the breadth of the security industry now and the risks that our clients face.

There is a great opportunity to attract talent into the industry that may previously have entered law enforcement or the military. Security is a career that is valued throughout the world and the skills are transferable. I have colleagues around the globe dealing with the same issues facing us in Australia and there is a pool of incredibly talented individuals that would benefit our industry.

Natalie: What are your top two focus points as an ASIAL Board Member and why?

Rachael: ASIAL plays an important role for the security industry and the Board is made up of representatives of the industry. Running the business

that I do I am focused on small to medium sized security businesses and making sure that they are well represented. Small business is the largest employer in Australia yet often the focus can be more about large corporations and making sure they are supported. I know I bring a voice for the SME security companies to the Board and this helps keep a balance at Board level.

I am also focused on the improvement that ASIAL as an organisation can help facilitate for our industry. Our industry is larger than all the Police and Military in Australia and is rapidly changing. The structures and standards that we have today may be very different next year and ASIAL needs to help the industry adjust while leading the push for any improvement. There are many stakeholders related to our industry that want to dictate how our industry operates. They don't necessarily have the expertise, experience or sincerity to adequately define the security industry in Australia. As an industry we need to lead the way on any change and that is also what my focus as a Board member is about.

Natalie: How is your role at National Protective Services Pty Ltd going?

Rachael: I love what I do and am passionate about my company and the service we provide to our clients. This makes it great to come to work each day. Every day is different and I really enjoy that about my role as well.

The team I work with are equally passionate and I am blessed to be working with the talented diverse team that I do. Our company is almost 30 years old and so many on our team have been with us for a long time; we are like family and that is a reward in itself.

Our clients also have generally been with us for a long time. Getting to know them and supporting them through various security issues over the years gives me the greatest satisfaction. Our vision simply is 'we keep our clients safe and secure'. Every day I read that - it is my WHY. *si*