



## BSI certification of the Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS) helps security company T-Class gain an SIA business licence

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**Kim Beasley,**  
Managing Director, T-Class Limited

### Customer objectives

- Comply with forthcoming business licensing requirements
- Illustrate high levels of compliance
- Assure clients of commitment to best practice
- -Motivate staff and encourage loyalty
- Gain recognition as a reputable provider of security services

### Customer benefits

- Conformance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- Badge-on-the-wall best practice
- Alignment of two quality brands in T-Class and BSI
- A more engaged workforce
- Ability to attract and retain high-end clients

### Customer background

T-Class Security specializes in security solutions for high-end retailers, including Cartier, Burberry, and within Selfridges, as well as clubs, pubs, and restaurants, from The Groucho Club to the Hard Rock Café. It also supplies security to the corporate sector and the events industry, while close protection services account for around 20% of its business.

Based in central London and established in 1998, T-Class now has a turnover of over £6m, employs 200 permanent staff, and around 200 self-employed security professionals.

### Why certification?

Although the security officers engaged by T-Class possess their own individual licences issued by the industry's regulating body, the Security Industry Authority (SIA), the government is proposing that from April 2015 all regulated companies will require a business licence. The objective is to create a fairer business environment, removing rogue operators from the security industry and offering clients an assurance of competence and integrity from those delivering security services.

Three pathways to securing a licence are now available, one of which is third-party certification from BSI to the SIA's voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS). For T-Class, the new proposals are not a worry as it already has Approved Contractor status, as well as certification to the international quality management system standard ISO 9001, and the associated British standards. As Managing Director Kim Beasley explains, "We have been in the ACS since 2007, and although some clients are largely unaware of it, there are others that understand the regulatory system inside out, and expect ACS registration as a prerequisite for doing business, especially when they know it's assessed by BSI. If we gain – or keep – just one client because of that association, it's worth it for us."

Kim has strong views on business licensing, as he explains: "This is a very price-driven industry, and it needs a compulsory scheme

that will enable companies to operate on a level playing field. Business licensing is the next step on from the voluntary ACS. It's a sensible move; it's more robust, and it's fairer for both suppliers of security services and their clients."

### Benefits

ACS certification demonstrates to clients that T-Class is meeting the security industry's recognized best practice, that it is a quality supplier and highly compliant, but it is also very much an ongoing process. Regular assessments against relevant British security standards and other legislation mean the company cannot become complacent. "We're a standards-driven organization and part of that commitment to standards means we're constantly reviewing our operation, and striving to improve it," says Kim.

Being involved in the SIA-ACS and having that assessed by BSI has certainly helped drive business growth, although Kim likes to think of broader benefits as opposed to the purely financial. "If BSI was not involved in the assessment process, I would be more concerned with return on investment, what's in it for us," says Kim. "But as it is, we get so much from having that link. We may lose the odd one or two clients who are only interested in getting the cheapest deal, but we also attract high-end clients who want their security company to operate to the same high professional standards that they observe. When we talk about our business, we talk about our association with BSI, and that is worth its weight in gold."

### Implementation

Kim is convinced that if it were not for the people issue, the assessment process "would have taken about 20 minutes!" He explains, "The people management aspect of certification is the most difficult – you have to prove evidence for all areas, such as recruitment, vetting, pay and reward, welfare, everything to do with people. And in an industry where staff turnover is high, and wages are fairly low, it's not always easy to get the employee collaboration you need to fulfil the assessment process. Whether it's a guard not turning up for his appraisal or an

unshaven doorman refusing to smarten up his appearance, we have to tread carefully."

The company's answer to the problem is to accept that employees cannot all be treated in the same way, that some need to be managed differently. Kim describes how BSI communicating with those on the ground has helped. "To understand what goes on in the security sector, you have to be in touch, and that is what BSI does", he says. "Our assessor knows us well, and he gets to know our officers when he's on site visits. Talking to them makes a huge difference." With BSI's support, T-Class has achieved high levels of buy-in from staff.

Interpreting the requirements of the audit is not always easy and Kim was grateful to BSI for clarifying certain areas. "Anyone can come in and box-tick their way through an audit, but BSI really understand our business," he says. "For example, when it came to staff welfare visits, we had an over-complicated view of what they should entail. A site audit, including an equipment check, a chat about any issues, and a catch-up with the store manager was sufficient – we were actually already carrying out welfare checks and we didn't realize it! Our assessor made us see that visiting our sites and talking to our people fulfilled the audit requirements."

### BSI's role

It is that flexibility in the way the assessment process is approached, combined with a thorough knowledge of the security industry, that has forged such a strong link between BSI and T-Class.

"The BSI assessor has been very helpful with an excellent understanding of the security industry and our business. If he identifies a problem during assessments, he explains carefully the actual requirements of the standard so that we can decide how best to take it forward and address the issues," explains Kim.

"This industry is all about reputation. We have a cracking reputation and BSI certification is a factor in that," concludes Kim.

