When Blank Rome, a 70 year old prestigious law firm, learned its existing access control system was end of life, Director of Information Security, Robert Weaver, was faced with a decision. Should Blank Rome continue using its current system, Facility Commander, where getting replacement parts would become expensive and difficult to source, or should they consider a new alternative?

Weaver turned to its long time partner and integrator, The Protection Bureau, for an answer. Together, Weaver and The Protection Bureau President, J. Matthew Ladd, reviewed the pros and cons of staying with Facility Commander, or upgrading their system and installing AMAG Technology’s Symmetry SR Retrofit Controller system. The Symmetry SR Retrofit solution offered an easy and affordable upgrade path. Blank Rome could keep their existing hardware, saving thousands of dollars, and upgrade to a state-of-the-art access control system that would expand as their company grew. Having a system that could grow with them was important as the company is currently adding more offices.

“We wanted to present Blank Rome with the best option that would fit their needs,” said The Protection Bureau President, J. Matthew Ladd.

“We worked with The Protection Bureau to identify an upgrade path that was going to be effective and cost efficient and provide us with the functionality that we were looking for. They recommended AMAG’s SR system,” said Blank Rome, Director of Information Security, Robert Weaver.

Blank Rome required a centralized enterprise access control system to limit access throughout their offices and protect their physical assets. Symmetry would secure nine locations and be managed from one office. Remote monitoring and identity management were critical requirements for the system.

The Symmetry SR Retrofit solution allowed Blank Rome to use their existing card readers, cards, locks, request to exit devices and enclosures. The Protection Bureau converted their database and easily changed out every controller. The Protection Bureau and Blank Rome worked closely throughout a lengthy pre-planning phase to ensure project success. The conversion would be done live, while the current system was running. This was no easy task.

“We are not a giant company, and we rely on The Protection Bureau’s advice and support on the system, and they did a great job,” Weaver.

Blank Rome’s current system had been installed since 1997, and The Protection Bureau’s knowledge of the system was
important to the success of the conversion. A conservative hardware timeframe was established, and The Protection Bureau was able to accelerate that dramatically once they saw how quickly the panels were swapping out. The Protection Bureau built a parallel system, installed the new software and approximately seven clients to prepare the environment prior to the conversion.

A month before the conversion, The Protection Bureau provided a one-day training for Weaver and his security team where they learned the system and went over troubleshooting, maintenance and badge creation. Blank Rome found Symmetry access control software easy to learn and use.

Cloning the environment took a week of reprogramming hardware components using the old system as a template. All cardholders and access levels were migrated from the old system to the new Symmetry SR system. Once the migration was complete and Symmetry software online, The Protection Bureau manually programmed each site location including each controller, reader, input and output.

“It went so smoothly that we didn’t need to get involved,” said Weaver.

“From the integrator side, we couldn’t have asked for a smoother conversion,” said Ladd.

The Protection Bureau and Blank Rome carefully timed the card export to coordinate with business operations. The card export of 1200 cardholders took a day and a half, which was quick, and the staff didn’t notice the seamless changeover.

“The whole project went very quickly,” said Weaver. “There was no downtime and no data re-entry; all the data was converted over for us.”

“The reporting capabilities are easy to use and provide the data I need,” said Weaver.

Blank Rome was the first large-scale SR retrofit opportunity for The Protection Bureau. They dove in and completed nine sites throughout the US and one in Shanghai, China. Their familiarity with the product helped make the conversion go smoothly.

“From our standpoint, it just went beautifully. We had to tweak one or two small things, but nothing major,” said Ladd. “It’s hard to keep two systems operational at the same time, but this conversion process is literally plug and play, just like AMAG said it was.”

“The Protection Bureau managed the database conversion well and converted it quickly. Not just any integrator can perform this type of conversion. We’ve been working with The Protection Bureau since 1997 and are always pleased with the level of service we receive from them,” said Weaver. “The entire staff is top notch. They are knowledgeable about the product. They help us on-the-spot and we have a very positive relationship.”

**Project Specs**

Symmetry Enterprise Access Control Software

Cardholders – 1200

Readers - 250

Offices - 10