

High-Profile Exhibitions Pose Security Staffing Challenge for Museums

Philadelphia Museum of Art & The Franklin

Situation: At the top of what many people around the world refer to as “The Rocky Steps,” is the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Established in 1876 in conjunction with the nation’s Centennial Exposition, it is one of the largest art museums in the United States. The museum houses 225,000 objectives spanning the creative achievements of the Western world since the first century A.D., and those of Asia since the third millennium B.C.

About a mile east of the Art Museum on Philadelphia’s famous Benjamin Franklin Parkway is The Franklin, founded in 1824 in honor of its namesake. It houses the impressive Benjamin Franklin National Memorial.

These museums are just two of the many beautiful landmarks that showcase some of the world’s most breathtaking treasures. Security teams are quietly watching over these and other similar facilities. Visitors often only take notice of them when they need directions or have a medical emergency but the security officers are there every day. They patrol the exhibits and stand post at the ready, prepared to assist the visitors and museum staff.

For the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s Renoir Landscapes exhibition (Oct. 4, 2007 to Jan. 6, 2008), attendance was 173,000. While visitors were looking at Renoir’s masterpieces, Allied Universal personnel were guarding the priceless works of art and providing customer service.

Allied Universal also protected the \$675 million King Tut collection at The Franklin. For seven months between Feb. 3, 2007, and Sept. 30, 2007, 1.29 million visitors came to The Franklin to see Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs.

These are just two examples of the many facilities throughout the United States where Allied Universal helps museums avoid vandalism, injuries and theft, and maintains a high level of customer service that makes visitors feel comfortable and informed.

Museums may not be one of the first venues that come to mind when considering the critical role that security plays. But, the volume of visitors constantly moving in and out of these facilities, coupled with the ever changing, and extremely rare and valuable exhibits, make museum security extremely important.

Allied Universal security officers assigned to museum locations have posts that may require specialized training in addition to their standard requirements. In many instances they are educated on new exhibitions, artists, and other important facts that may be given in response to a visitor’s question. They also get special training in assisting handicapped visitors and in relation to the changing layout of each exhibit — which may impact security strategy.

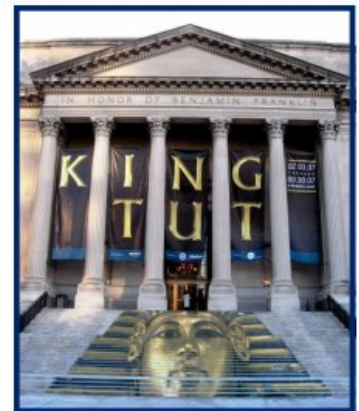
Challenge: High-profile exhibitions and the special events that accompany them regularly require considerable advance planning and sometimes unpredictable, last

Location:

Philadelphia, PA

Statistics:

- > The most visited venue in the North American tour of *King Tut*
- > One of the largest art museums in the United States
- > Constantly changing event schedules and exhibits



minute additional staffing and special requests from management. The Philadelphia Museum of Art's Renoir Landscapes and The Franklin's Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs are two such instances that tasked Allied Universal and their clients to prepare in advance a game plan to meet many challenges, including responding quickly and efficiently when the number of visitors swells beyond expectations.

In the case of the Art Museum, there are strict training requirements that must be met and only properly trained officers are assigned to this location. Only security officers who have received 16 hours of supplemental museum-specific training in addition to their 16 hours of standard security officer training, are eligible to work at the museum. This posed a challenge for Allied Universal who needed to provide additional security personnel on short notice but was committed to only providing staff that met the special requirements the contract security firm developed for the museum's unique needs.

"We work very closely with the Art Museum's security staff which is headed by Herb Lottier," said John Russell, Allied Universal's Vice President of Operations. "Once the museum schedules a major exhibit, which could be a year in advance, we begin planning for all contingencies. In addition to the advanced planning, we must also be prepared to react quickly to secure the events that accompany the exhibits, like parties, dinners, VIP receptions, and a wide spectrum of other related functions."

Russell explained that these functions and last-minute affairs could take place every day of the week while the exhibition is on display. Allied Universal's recruiting and training departments work hard to keep a pool of talented candidates and cross-trained officers available.

Advanced planning is essential to the success of any museum-related activity. "VIP parties are scheduled as far ahead as possible to avoid surprises," Lottier said.

"We take advantage of the lead time to recruit and train a sizeable number of additional personnel, creating a pipeline to meet any last-minute event situations that may arise. For Renoir, we added 75 officers four months in advance and assigned them for duty throughout the museum," Russell said. "We find that our best security officers are those who spend the time, feel the pace of the museum's galleries, and understand the importance of their jobs."

Russell noted that an event list is regularly posted for the entire week to allow museum-trained security officers to enroll for special assignments. "It's a built-in pipeline. It works well for everyone," he said.

Justin Kleskie, Allied Universal's District Manager, said the company's daily staffing levels for Renoir and their response to staffing needs at special events associated with the world-class exhibition were quite effective.

For the King Tut exhibit, the biggest challenge was planning for the sheer volume of people from all over the world who came through the doors at The Franklin during the seven-month engagement.

"Our anticipated attendance for planning purposes was one million guests," said Mark Harmon, Director of Safety and Security for The Franklin. "We also felt that we could surpass that number, ending up somewhere between 1.2 million and 1.5 million. The exhibition exceeded its initial attendance forecast by almost 30 percent, making it the most-visited venue of the North American tour of the boy king."

Harmon said his expectations were set very high; very few staffing changes were made during the length of the run.

With thousands of men, women and children visiting the museum each day to see the historic exhibit, security officers had to present a fresh, aware and authoritative presence.

Working on extensive preparations with Harmon, the Allied Universal team met weekly beginning six months out with Harmon and his staff to create a security plan designed especially for King Tut.

Included on their preparation checklist were:

- Identifying posts and physical staffing requirements for the exhibit, and its move-in and move-out
- Coordinating schedules with the Philadelphia Police Department

- Hosting a special recruiting Job Fair for the assignment and conducting site specific training classes for new security officers and supervisors
- Coordinating customer service training classes for security officers assigned to the exhibit
- Developing fire evacuation plans and conducting drills
- Developing medical emergency procedures
- Implementing a roll-call program for staff

Results: Allied Universal and the museum clients have found that advance planning, and the ability to recruit and train quickly to meet advance and short-notice staffing changes is the most effective method of responding to the challenge of such large and popular exhibits.

“We meet on a weekly basis with Herb Lottier at the Art Museum to discuss operational issues, staffing, anticipated parties and receptions, and other topics of importance,” Russell said. “We’re all on the same page and everyone knows what’s happening. This cooperative arrangement allows us to work more effectively and efficiently.”

While Allied Universal and their museum clients work together to develop strategies for these exhibits, the logistics and timing can change at any time. Experienced museum staff can anticipate the visitor level for a given event but that too can change. A widely popular exhibit can quickly exceed expectations, as was the case at The Franklin.

The museum was pleased with Allied Universal’s handling of the tens of thousands of people who attended. The company’s response to last minute scheduling for special events proved extremely effective. A procedure was established where Allied Universal could summon additional security officers at a moment’s notice to staff these events.

Allied Universal’s management and security teams at the museum are always responsive and ready to meet changing staffing and training needs. That is possible because of the company’s infrastructure and national support. Having the flexibility to not only provide personnel quickly, but security officers and managers trained specifically for each site’s needs, makes all the difference.

“Many King Tut visitors told us, ‘your people are great,’” Russell noted. “That told us that we did a thorough job.”

“We certainly accomplished everything we planned — nothing was damaged, incident calls (mostly medical) were handled quickly and professionally, and on-site management was very responsive to our needs and those of our visitors,” The Franklin’s Harmon said.

Advance planning, thoroughly trained and informed personnel, adequate staffing of essential posts, and an emphasis on customer service and interpersonal skills all contribute to the Allied Universal formula for effective museum security. That formula is carried out at museum sites across the country.

“Security is of paramount importance to a visitor’s museum experience,” the Art Museum’s Lottier said. “Typically, we are the only people that a visitor will see — we’re uniformed, we’re highly visible, and we’re all over the building. Our partnership with Allied Universal provides us with high-quality security officers who help to make a visit to the Philadelphia Museum of Art a positive, enlightening experience.”