

■ By Sharon Verbeten

# Show and tell

## Security firm uses interactive showroom as marketing tool



Lappen Security Products owner Mike Wildenberg shows off security camera views at the company's new interactive showroom in Little Chute.

To that end, the showroom, located on Little Chute's main drag where four separate buildings used to stand, displays the company's line of locks, burglar/fire alarms, hardware, safes, access control systems and 16 working on-site surveillance cameras.

"It just makes sense," says Lappen's sales manager, Matthew Bent. "It gives everybody the opportunity to see the product lines we do."

"Everything that was done in the past was sight unseen. One of the hardest things is to educate people on what security is. They assume 'a camera is a camera.'"

—Mike Wildenberg, owner of Lappen Security Products

### ROOTS IN LOCKSMITHING

Wildenberg bought the company 25 years ago, at which time it was strictly a locksmithing business. As demand for additional security products grew, Lappen expanded its services accordingly.

"All that stuff was out there, and the electronics end was very primitive and very expensive," adds Wildenberg. Turning the company into more of

#### CLOSER LOOK

For more information on Lappen Security Products, visit [www.lappensecurity.com](http://www.lappensecurity.com).

PERHAPS THE MOST VALUABLE MARKETING advice any business owner can get is based on a favorite kindergarten activity: Show and tell.

The simple act of showing and telling customers about one's products and services can be indispensable. That's what Mike Wildenberg, owner of Lappen Security Products in Little Chute, has learned. And that's what led the company – which has been around since 1953 – to invest in a new, 2,200-square-foot interactive showroom.

"What we want to provide is a place where people can get educated," says Wildenberg. "That's one of the main reasons we did it."

Prior to building the showroom, Wildenberg says it was often difficult to convey the company's offerings to potential customers. "Everything that was done in the past was sight unseen," he says. "One of the hardest things is to educate people on what security is. They assume 'a camera is a camera.'"

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a "one-stop shop" for security has made Lappen the only company in the Fox Valley that focuses 100 percent on security products and services, according to Bent.

That's important, Wildenberg adds, because "in our bidding process, we were going up against people not in the security business," such as heating/cooling companies offering security products on the side.

"Cost is always important," Wildenberg admits. "We have to be competitive, but we're going to put in products we know, and there's no way you're the cheapest *and* the best."

### THE COST OF SECURITY

In addition to such competition, Lappen also finds that clients often research and purchase security products on the Internet, which Wildenberg and Bent agree can be risky.

"I can't tell you the number of times that people call and tell us they bought [a camera] online and they can't see anything with it," Wildenberg says. Or, "You can get it online cheaper.' That's what we hear more than anything."

Offering technical support on the back end and solid product knowledge on the front end has helped Lappen compete. Last year, for example, the company installed a Paxton Access system in the Little Chute Area School District.

"Security is important," says Jim Fochs, the district's director of building and grounds. "It is encouraging to install a system and have it operating as advertised on the first attempt. It went in quickly without any disruption to students or staff."

Even in tough economic times, security

remains a mainstay of many businesses and residences (90 percent of Lappen's clientele are commercial/industrial firms, mainly in Northeast Wisconsin).

"In this economic climate, people want to protect what they have. When [the economy] is bad, it's still OK for us," says Wildenberg.

And that's what has made "show and tell" even more vital to Lappen. "We've had extremely good success," Wildenberg says of the showroom. "Even if we don't get the job, I know the potential customer walked away with more information."

"I believe this is one of the best investments I ever made." ■

**SECURITY**

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