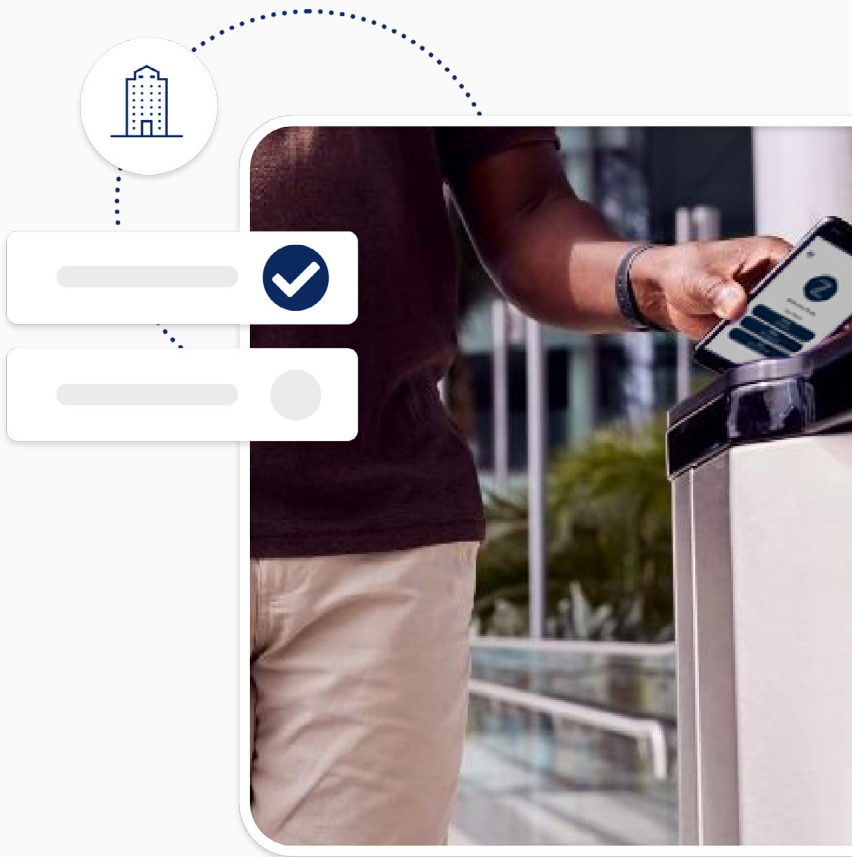# Zerv

# The Ultimate Guide to Retrofitting Your Access Control System

Ripping and replacing your outdated access control system is time-consuming and expensive. Find out why enhancing your current system is the better option.

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# The Pricing Dilemma

Access control is an essential function of building operations and security. When the time comes to replace access control infrastructure, owners and operators are faced with an important question: do they completely rip out and replace their current system, or try to update it? Among the many factors influencing this decision, number one is usually the cost.

## The Pain of Access Control Pricing

According to Vizpin, the typical cost of a new access control system is anywhere between $1,500 - $2,500 with new key cards and fobs costing $3 - $7 each. This is a huge expense for any type of building, but especially for those with multiple access points and long lists of tenants or employees.

In addition to the upfront price tag, there is the cost of disruption to tenants and staff due to closures for maintenance and installation, leading to lost revenue and unhappy customers.

## More for Less

These costs drive many owners to stick with their outdated access control systems. However, rip-and-replace is no longer the only option available. System enhancements are becoming increasingly popular and provide all of the same benefits of the rip-and-replace method with a fraction of the cost. A simple, elegant retrofit makes it all possible.

This option saves money and time. An update can cost less than $100 per access point and takes minutes to install instead of weeks. All while allowing you to reap the benefits of a completely modernized system with mobile credentials rather than physical access cards.

Unlike many other assets and equipment, access control systems are perfect for retrofit. You can only repair a car so many times before it's time to send it to the junkyard.; but this is not the case for access control infrastructure. Most access system components receive minimal wear and tear, allowing them to function for a very long time.

# Racing Against the Clock

What does everyone hate wasting more than money? Time. Even on an unlimited budget, ripping and replacing archaic systems still takes more time than most organizations can afford to spend. That leads organizations to keep delaying access control overhaul projects until later (and then later, and then later…).

## Hurry Up to Wait

Umbrella Technologies estimates that it can take up to an hour per door to install new access control infrastructure. While this doesn't seem too concerning if you are only replacing a single access point, it compounds quickly when considering an entire building with tens or hundreds of doors…and a portfolio with as many buildings.

And installation is only one piece of the time constraint puzzle. You have to schedule time for multiple vendors to visit the location and quote estimates, wait for hardware to be shipped, and block time to rip out your existing infrastructure. Even more frustrating, depending on your location and project size, you will be subjected to lengthy permitting requirements. With all of these factors adding up, your rip-and-replace option is never as fast as you originally thought it would be.

## Your Time Is Valuable—Treat it That Way

On paper, ripping and replacing your existing infrastructure may seem simple. You buy the new hardware, unplug your current system, and install the new one. But it's never that easy. Unfortunately, many chips need to fall into place before you get to plug in your new system. Organizational buy-in, budgeting meetings, working with your financial and procurement departments. To sum it up: lots of paperwork.

When you're finally ready to upgrade your access control system, you don't want to wait several months to a year or more. You want it done now. If you decide to enhance your existing system instead of replacing it, you're making the choice to have all of the modern features without the excruciating time delay.

Your foundation of hardware and process is there, you don't have to wait on hardware to be shipped to you, and you don't need to waste time waiting for armies of inspectors come out to evaluate your space. All the hard work and investment has been done already; a retrofit lets you take advantage of it.

## Avoid the Bureaucracy

For certain new systems and installation processes, you need permits and licensing. This often includes additional fees on top of the already pricey overhaul. You'll have to figure out if the new system will pass your security requirements, how it communicates with the fire code, how quickly new credentials will come in, and how to integrate it with the rest of your BMS, just to name a few. With an access control enhancement, you get to skip the paperwork and get started right away.

## Work Smarter, Not Harder

Why invest your time, money, and energy into a brand new system when you can reap the same benefits simply by retrofitting your current system? Save your energy and capital for big initiatives deserving of your manpower and resources, and take the smarter route to a smarter system.

# The State of Your Security

Access control is as much about letting people in as it is keeping threats out. These systems are your first line of defense, which means security priorities need to be at the top of your list when comparing a retrofit or rip-and-replace option.

## Dangers of Outdated Access Control Systems

A large proportion of access control systems still being used today are running off technology from 20 or 30 years ago, which presents huge security risks. Most of these systems use old software and rely on physical credentials like key cards, fobs, or even mechanical keys.

With these types of systems comes a lot of vulnerabilities. Their credentials are easily stolen or lost, they're easy to duplicate, and pass-backs or tailgating are far too easy. It's a serious and costly weakness: 41% of security executives believe the cost of tailgating ranges from $2 million to "too high to measure" for their firm.

## Modern Solutions for Modern Security

By retrofitting your current, outdated system you can eliminate or mitigate most of these risks. An enhanced access control system offers secure mobile credentials rather than physical ones. This grants several security advantages including:

- A phone is far less likely to be lost or stolen than a physical key
- Phones have their own security features that make accessing credentials more difficult
- Digital access credentials can immediately be revoked or granted remotely

## Security Through Data

Retrofitting your system also comes with more intelligent data that can help even further with security mitigation. Real-time data reporting allows you to see who is using the building, how they are using it, and where. This means you can identify if someone is where they shouldn't be quicker or proactively shift security personnel to areas with high traffic.
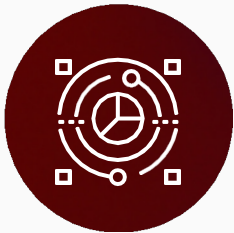
## Big Data, Small Investment

Data can help mitigate security risks, but it can also help you save money. One of the most challenging parts of owning a large building is understanding how people are using it and making sure you are allocating resources correctly.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to see exactly when and where people are so you no longer have to rely on assumptions to make decisions? By enhancing your current access control system, this future fantasy is now a modern solution.

# The Real Value of Access Control Data

Old access control systems offer old data (or none at all).  Even the systems that are able to produce some data usually do so ineffectively or so slowly that it quickly loses value. However, modernized systems offer more data in a more streamlined way which offers immediate and long-term benefits to property owners, managers, and tenants.

### Sustainability Through Data

Knowing in real-time who is using the building and where allows you to better manage your HVAC system, lights, and water (think: dynamic utilities). This results in greener, more sustainable buildings and smaller utility bills.

### Security

With more up-to-date data, you can easily identify security threats and approach potential problems proactively rather than waiting for an incident to occur and then responding.

### Investment Opportunities

Seeing exactly when, where, and how your building is being used empowers you to make smarter investment  decisions for the future of your portfolio and space.

### Public Health and Safety

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people use spaces. With modern data, you can see who was in a building, where they were, and when, which is extremely helpful for contact tracing. You can also immediately limit access to a room if it is too full to enforce social distancing.

### User Experience

No one wants to waste time. However, according to Network World, office workers in New York alone have spent a total of 16.6 years just waiting for elevators. Better data and cross-system integration make getting into and through a structure effortless and automatic, saving time for guests and tenants alike.

## Old Dog, New Tricks

There is no limit to how data can be utilized. However; to get this priceless data, you need a system that can provide it quickly and accurately. By retrofitting your current system, you can 'teach' it to start collecting valuable data immediately. With this data you'll be able to see how a building is truly used, leading you to a smarter, and greener way to run your organization.
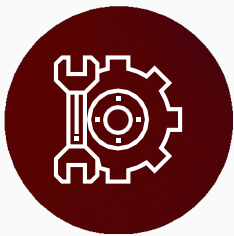
# Waste Not, Want Not

Generally overlooked in the world of access control is the topic of waste that this industry generates. New access control systems help your building become more efficient and green, but a rip-and-replace means every old reader, wire and controller becomes trash filling up a dumpster. E-waste makes up 2% of the trash in America's landfills and accounts for 70% of our toxic waste that's going back into the environment.

We are all looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact. Retrofitting rather than ripping and replacing your access control systems is one important way to make a big impact with minimal effort.

## Reduce, Reuse, Upcycle

Recycle is the third piece of the big "Three R's" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and for good reason. Only about 12.5% of e-waste gets recycled. This means almost most of the plastic panels, wires, and keys you no longer need are destined for the landfill.

Instead of tearing out your old system and throwing it into a trash can to add to our already inundated landfills, you can simply refurbish it to something that is good as (or better than) new.
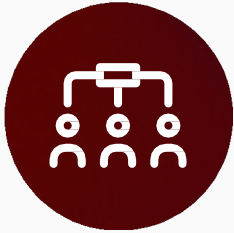
# The Impact on Your People

Another overlooked piece of the rip-and-replace process is the strain it puts on your own staff. Many parts of the organization will be affected, but the most impacted will be your operations department who have their boots on the ground and are overseeing the upgrade. It also will take time to install, reprogram, and learn for every single person who must use it.

## Not the Same Old Same Old

From the outside looking in, most access control systems look the same. But once you dive into everything going on behind the scenes, there are a lot of important differences your operational staff and management team will need to account for.

Ripping and replacing your old system with a new one is much more than just taking out some hardware and plugging in new. You have to account for the installation, troubleshooting, new standard operating procedures, and updating integrations. You'll be dealing with new vendors and will have to provide training and certification to relevant staff, and in some cases even hire new people who can manage the new system.

Your team became experts in maintaining your old system, but with the new one? Now they have to completely relearn how to do anything with it. That disruption has spillover effects on the rest of your business operations that now take a backseat.

## Relief for Your Workforce

From a strained global supply chain to a shift to flexible work arrangements, organizations everywhere are struggling to adapt. Hiring is harder, taking longer, and turnover is higher than ever before which puts more pressure on current employees to pick up the slack.

In times of rapid change, innovation and automation become more important than ever. Anywhere technology can take some responsibility off someone's plate frees up time and energy for them to focus on mission-critical operations. For example:

- Streamlined data allows you to proactively avoid security situations rather than reacting to them.

- Eliminating physical badges means less time spent ordering more and reassigning.
- On-demand remote access makes it easier for internal or third-party maintenance staff to move throughout your portfolio quickly and without needing another person on-site to let them in.

This added efficiency makes a big difference for you and your team and allows you to focus on the important things rather than tedious and time-consuming activities.

## An Easier Way to Lighten the Load

While having a new smart access control system that will provide all these benefits sounds great, ripping and replacing your old system amid labor and product shortages doesn't. Something you are trying to get done so you can be more efficient and streamlined ends up being labor-intensive and time-consuming.

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## Risky Business

We've covered just about every reason you should consider retrofitting your current access control system rather than ripping it out and replacing it. However, we haven't yet covered what happens if you get a new install wrong.

### You Can't Afford to Fail

Access control systems are vital to the lifeline of your building. They keep people and assets safe and allow people to get to where they need to be.

What if it goes wrong?

If someone can't get into their office or home, or if a security risk somehow gets in, you could have a lot of problems on your hands. An unsuccessful install is poised to cause expensive delays and time-consuming issues that will blow up your budget, and compromise security.

### Doing Nothing Isn't An Option

With this said, your current access control system will only continue to age and grow more obsolete. The older they get, the more vulnerable they become and the more at risk you are to hacks and exploits like tailgating or pass-backs.

These older systems exist without many of the benefits modern infrastructure offers like mobile credentials and real-time data reporting. Eventually, an update will be essential.

## Enhancing Access Made Easy

Enhancing your current access control systems via retrofit is the most reliable way to avoid setbacks while still gaining the modern features of a new access control system.

This update comes at a fraction of the cost, time, and effort of a full rip-and-replace option, and still provides you with the exact same outcome. It's like a minimally invasive surgery that disrupts nothing and lets you retain all the processes and infrastructure you have already established.

Zerv offers pain-free retrofit options that transform old infrastructure into modern, welcoming access experiences. Reach out today to learn more about how we can help you enhance and connect your outdated systems.