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Safe and Sound

SECURITY AND LIFE SAFETY SYSTEMS ARE NO LONGER MERE ADD-ONS TO ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNS

by Kim Wooder

If the language of an industry reflects its future, then the security business is headed for the clouds. Security experts agree that technology is transforming the business of keeping clients safe, whether the client in question is a concerned homeowner or a multinational corporation. According to Iain Morton, vice president Canada for ADT Business Solutions, "Cloud computing, reliable and cost-effective network connections, advances in technology and our investment in highly skilled technicians, network design staff and monitoring centre personnel allowed us to expand beyond our traditional offerings by providing more consistent, comprehensive and advanced solutions in a variety of key markets. These investments allow us to design both on-site and remote solutions that help drive operational efficiencies, reduce risk, increase compliance controls and allow us to act as a business partner to our customers versus the traditional deter, detect and respond approach of the security industry."

Lobo Consulting Services principal Colin Lobo says industry-applicable technology is advancing all the time and companies have to keep up with the latest developments. His company is a security consulting firm specializing in high-level or maximum-security facilities such as jails and courthouses. It is also well established in the fields of police, health care and education. Lobo says his firm has a front-row seat at the two biggest security conferences of the year to get a first-hand look at manufacturers' new products.

The company is also in constant contact with the various manufacturers and developers who often come to Lobo's headquarters to demonstrate products. Lobo says it is fascinating to watch the evolution of products and debate their potential. As independent security consultants, Lobo Consulting Services has no affiliation with any manufacturer and chooses the products that will provide the best design solutions for its clients.

New technology isn't the only driver when it comes to design

solutions in the security industry. Changes in protocol are also factors. Lobo uses courthouses as an example, explaining, "Security screening has now become an essential element of any type of courthouse, which affects the architectural designs because now you have to ensure that everyone comes in through one point for screening. The only way in is the only way out."

According to Lobo, security was often an add-on to the architectural designs in the past. "Today, we are seeing more of a push to involve security right from the beginning," he notes, "so it is an essential element in the building design, similar to other disciplines." Having the security consultants on board at the start of the project also allows them to look at the architectural designs and assess any potential security risks.

Randy Krzak, vice-president of technology and marketing with Chubb Edwards, agrees that integration of services is the key to success. He admits it is a challenge for team members to keep up with the pace of security-related technology. "One of the things we try to do with these groups," Krzak says, "is to make sure they have the current information."

Last year, Chubb Edwards hosted a road show across Canada. "We invited engineers, contractors and that whole community out to spend the day with us looking at the new

technologies that we bring to the market: fire panels, our security monitoring and fire monitoring systems." Another important component involves changes to standards and how they impact the market. Krzak says it is vital to keep the community aware of what is going on in the industry, in terms of both standards and technology.

Chubb Edwards' clientele includes big names in finance, retail, health care and education, all of which benefit from the company's ability to offer a wide range of security and life safety solutions, everything from fire to sound and communication systems, video management, IP-enabled remote services and mass notification. Krzak says interest in mass notification systems was triggered by attacks on U.S. military bases and university campuses. "More and more," Krzak explains, "we are seeing institutions - colleges, universities, municipalities, health-care authorities, university campuses - looking at mass notification solutions that allow them to broadcast, for example, to individual desktops and mobile phones." Chubb Edwards' system does that and more. It also allows the system to take over plasma screens in a building's lobby and broadcast warnings over loudspeakers.

Mass notification is a clear illustration of the continuing movement toward total system integration. As Krzak notes, "Physical Security Information Management (PSIM) is a key to enhancing the customer interface and it underpins all of our system integration efforts. A holistic approach anchored in PSIM principles optimizes workflow for the client and also delivers access to consolidated, centralized information. What results is better decision making and enhanced risk mitigation."

Mark Thomas is the regional general manager, security and fire Canada for Johnson Controls. Thomas says the security business is driven by incidents that may have been prevented with the application of some of the solutions the industry now has to offer.

Thomas says there is something on the horizon that will help and it is no surprise that technology plays a huge part. "Our

business is going towards what we call Building Wise Systems Integration where everything is on the same platform." The BWSI approach will reduce the risk of overlap in a building as well as minimize scope gap and help to realize cost efficiencies. Here again, the word integration is in play as Thomas explains ways to layer the card access system into the CCTV system, or the parking gates into the time and attendance system. Thomas says that even though the systems share a common platform, there is no risk of multiple system outages as each system can operate autonomously.

Thomas adds, "The security business is very much evolving for us, going ever more technical with ever-increasing amounts of integration to other systems and always with a mind to sustainability and efficiency."

Houle Electric Limited division manager Gabriel Ana says the idea of unified buildings, in terms of security platforms, is not a new one and in fact dates back to the late '80s. "It was a buzzword back then, the notion of buildings where everything from lighting systems to access control and CCTV to HVAC could speak with everything else. It didn't go anywhere back then," Ana says, "because the technology wasn't mature enough and the systems were very proprietary. But all that is changing and standardized systems are finally here." The migration from standalone to IP in all of the building systems, including security, is the key. Ana explains, "All the systems in buildings, including security now live on the network and live by the rules of IP systems and devices."



ADT's Iain Morton suggests that as a whole the industry has had to become much more agile in response to the growing changes in technology. Morton says, "As IP-centric solutions have become the mainstay of the industry, security has had to adapt to the ever-changing IT world." He adds there is no choice. "The technical knowledge integrators will need

to step up their game in the coming year because deploying cloud-based and managed services will require knowledge and expertise on par with learning IT in the first place."

Louis Bouchard says there is room in the industry for technology old and new. Bouchard is the executive VP at Mirtech International Security, a company that prides itself on its long-time client list. Bouchard recalls that people were talking about IP cameras years ago. "The cameras were supposed to revolutionize the industry," he remembers, "and everyone was supposed to get on the bandwagon." It took eight more years for the technology to really take off.

Bouchard says his job isn't to hook his clients on the latest thing, but rather to assess his client's needs. "It must always come back to what best serves the client," Bouchard argues, "and coming up with a good solution and one that is also cost effective."

Bouchard says a great deal of the security hardware being used today has been in the market for a long time. "The thing that has changed," Bouchard says, "is the communication infrastructure where we have gone from hardwired to network-based systems." That has changed the security game for good, solving issues involving distance, for example, by providing a variety of ways to connect disparate and distant points. Bouchard sums up by saying that, "you can obviously do more with the newer technology but you have to define what the need is and whether those technologies fulfill those needs." ■