



Security on the move

Mobility and web features you should investigate before installing a surveillance system

As an integrator, what features should you be scouting for in mobile and web client applications? Here are five key features that I think are worth highlighting.

The first key feature is browser and device independence, where the benefits of added flexibility and freedom of choice hit home. A security platform's web client that is compatible with popular browsers will accommodate the preferences of your clients. Similarly, familiarizing yourself with a mobile app that is supported on the latest Apple, Blackberry, and Android smartphones or tablets will help you service clients that have a mix of these devices deployed.

The second feature is multi-system support. Although access to video was first offered through mobile applications, security encompasses many more systems.

For example, giving your customers remote connectivity to their video surveillance and access control systems, via a mobile app or unified web client, offers them more control and information at their disposal while helping you differentiate

your offering. Beyond retrieving live and playback video, the end user can remotely view access control events with correlated video, lock and unlock doors or monitor door status. They also avoid having to install more than one application.

When it comes specifically to video features in mobile apps, accessing cameras and reviewing video is quite common. But what if a mobile app could turn a smartphone into a mobile surveillance camera? This leads me to the third key feature. Some advanced mobile apps provide the ability to stream video from a smartphone in the field back to the security platform. This adds tremendous value to the mobile app as it essentially extends surveillance coverage to any location where cameras may not have been available.

The fourth feature involves user access privileges. Equally important to selling a security system or add-on like a mobile app or web client to a security director is selling the concept to an IT department. So it is not just about what the system or feature can do, but how secure the connectivity will be. Mobile

apps and web clients that feature user authentication, password protection and encrypted access to the server will contribute to a more secure system; but what happens when an operator loses his or her phone? Mobile apps that provide end users with the ability to restrict device access to the server or monitor failed login attempts will help reassure both security and IT departments that they are deploying both an efficient and secure tool.

Finally, the fifth feature is one that will help you upsell services: multi-tenant capabilities. In cases where there are multiple tenants in a building that share a security platform, an integrator can expand its business model to offer centrally managed services. This is done by hosting the main security system, and then deploying lightweight applications, such as a mobile app or a thin client, for each tenant, instead of resource-intensive workstation applications. **SP&T**

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LESSONS LEARNED

By Victor Harding



Alarming developments

Dealers are turning to other sources of revenue as their traditional business yields smaller returns

I am finding it harder and harder to find independent alarm dealers in the big cities in Canada that are actively chasing new alarm systems as a major part of their new business unless they are on an authorized dealer program.

"This should be a good time for those that offer dealer programs. Alarm dealers need you now more than ever."

There are still a few focusing on the "takeover" market where the install cost is not great or working with builders where the customer is taking home theatre and other products besides the alarm system in order to make the install worthwhile.

But most dealers I talk to are doing anything but installing alarms. They do have existing alarm

accounts but spend their days chasing various sizes of commercial jobs involving CCTV, access control or even a very large burglar alarm system for a commercial application.

When I ask them why this is I get one consistent message. It is simply not worth it for many reasons:

- Almost all new residential systems in the big cities have to go in free or next to free today — a higher percentage than ever before (as many as eight out of 10 in the GTA).
- Each one of these free new systems is costing so much more to get today. Customers are not satisfied anymore with just getting two doors and a motion for free. They want the whole nine yards. One dealer told me that it was costing him up to \$800 per system to get a new account and that's without sales commission.
- It is increasingly difficult to charge for service
- Dealer's liability exposure is ratcheting up as customers change their mode of communication for the alarm system from land-line to the Internet,

many times without telling the dealer.

Add these factors up and they make it a lot more expensive to be actively in the residential alarm business. The average alarm dealer might not notice some of these trends unless they spend time reflecting on them in regards to their business.

This is not to say that there is not residential alarm business to be had. Penetration of home alarm systems still sits at less than 20 per cent in Canada. And new home construction, while off from pre-recession highs, is still producing more than 150,000 homes per year in Canada.

However, if you don't have a lot of capital behind you, either your own or that of an authorized dealer program, it does not pay to be in this business. This should be a good time for those that offer dealer programs. Alarm dealers need you now more than ever. **SP&T**

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