ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEMS

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SYSTEMS

A Manager's Guide to Evaluating and Selecting System Solutions

Robert L. Pearson, PE



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Preface

The technology and sophistication of electronics has exploded. Digital cameras on cell phones and the Internet have affected everyone. It was not many years ago that a cell phone was a luxury; today it is becoming a necessity. The Internet has become part of the majority of households. Preschool children can operate personal computers and grandparents send messages and JPEG pictures over the Internet. Online purchasing and banking have become bigtime businesses, seriously impacting brick and mortar stores' sales. These enhancements and advantages in technology have been a benefit to our society by providing more capabilities, more automation, and less physical effort to accomplish a task at a reasonable cost. A microwave oven is the appliance of choice for most families today. Technology has impacted all aspects of our work and play.

These enhancements in technology have also affected security equipment. Enhanced sophisticated electronics is part of virtually every electronic security functional system. Processing capability has been added to the alarm sensors to mitigate false alarms and intelligence has been added to access cards/badges (smart cards) which process duplex communication via a reader. The card can be updated by the reader, can internally process information, and communicate back to the reader. Entire electronic functional

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systems have incorporated features that allow improved operation and integration into a total electronic security system solution. Even communications between field equipment and a central station have become faster and more sophisticated. The Internet/Intranet is part of many access control, alarm, and closed circuit television, CCTV, systems available in today's market.

The sophistication and intelligence in the systems have forced the end user to become more technically oriented. Unfortunately, the typical security professional's knowledge of these various systems has not kept pace with the changes. Over the years, there have been many seminars, books, and training classes related to physical security with the primary emphasis on personnel, legal issues, facility considerations, management, and interfacing with law enforcement. In the early days, the physical security profession focused on the physical issues while the electronic systems possessed very rudimentary capabilities. Since many security professionals in the private business sector originally came from a physical security/law enforcement background, this training was appropriate. With the expanding technology, the security professional tended to consider the electronic security applications based upon functional solutions versus a holistic approach. Little consideration has been given to a key sophisticated component of the security program as to ongoing issues, maintenance, system configuration, and system philosophies.

Even today, the information that is available is primarily constrained to an electronic security functional area. For example, CCTV systems information is available that explains the different camera technologies, digital video recording, matrix systems, different communication techniques, lighting issues, and so on. There is limited information as to how all these components of any one function should operate with other functional security systems. There is a need to provide information about these different electronic security functions with a focus on integration, philosophies, tradeoffs, and ongoing issues for the end user in a corporate environment. A holistic view will incorporate these concepts as well as the perceptions of employees, visitors, contractors, management, and various business units within the company. The electronic security functions in a corporate central monitoring facility must be evalvated.

Electronic security is a vital aspect of any security program. It is usually a major investment and should receive a high level of scrutiny by the security professional. Often the security professional accepts a new system or has an existing system upgraded without becoming personally involved, relying on the designer, manufacturer's representative, an alarm company, or an integrator. After the installation is complete, the security professional will become the system owner from upper management's viewpoint. For a security professional to be effective, he or she needs to understand the electronics and the interactions of various electronic security functions to some level as they are integrated into a total security system solution. With this knowledge, many pitfalls can be avoided. It is a mistake to believe that a new integrated security system is top quality based solely on the fact that several electronic security components are connected together. To be successful, the security professional does not have to be the designer; however, all aspects of a holistic view must be incorporated. Since the security professional does inherit the designer's system, thus becoming the system owner, it is imperative that a holistic view is taken and the capabilities of the various electronic systems are fully understood. Further, if the security professional is fully involved in system planning, establishing data input standards, functional expectations, training of staff, and so on, a significantly better end product is assured. Short cuts, intentional or not, will undermine the foundation on which the entire system rests. If the electronic security system functions poorly, is poorly maintained, or is poorly installed, every employee, visitor, contractor and manager will become aware of the problems and be critical of the security program.

The focus of this book is to help the security professional understand the various electronic security functional components and the ways these components interconnect, as well as provide a guide to a holistic approach to solving security issues with various technologies. Issues associated with integrating electronic functions, developing a system, component philosophy, possible long-term issues, and the culture within a corporation which will impact the final system design will also be discussed. The book includes a collection of practical experiences, solutions, and an approach to solving technical problems. Electronic security solutions are as much an art form as a science; there is not just one answer to a given problem.

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This book is not meant to be an engineering text, but is offered as a text for providing a solid understanding of the systems and issues that need to be addressed. Issues and information covered in this book will apply to many different environments. A corporate setting is used as its example; however, the basic issues can be applied to virtually any environment. It is my sincere hope that this book will provide you with insights into the various electronic systems and approaches to address electronic security issues by providing a life-time of acquired experiences gained through designing, installing and maintaining electronic security systems.

Acknowledgments

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