

Access Control at the Crossroads

How resellers can leverage new technologies to ultimately drive higher profits

The universal desire to provide new technologies that are more user-intuitive, sleeker and faster applies to all things electronic these days — including access control. There are many new access control and management technologies on the market today that promise dramatic improvements in performance and efficiency.

enhance pre-existing security, video surveillance and access control systems continues to gain traction with resellers and end-users. However, this type of higher-level business decision is not being followed by some mainstream manufacturers who are looking to push solutions designed specifically to drive new system installations — a go-to-market strategy that does not



Although there is no doubt that new technologies are driving system performance and integration enhancements, there are issues to be addressed that impact access control resellers, and ultimately, their customers. Three of the main industry drivers are access control system models; new business development; and training and continued education.

Making New Software Work for Old Systems

In the current marketplace, the concept of maintaining legacy support and the ability to

consider the financial needs and requirements of their own dealers and customers. The same holds true for new companies that enter the market and want to establish proprietary positions with first-generation products.

Other manufacturers of professional security and surveillance solutions, including Galaxy Control Systems, have taken a different route that maintains integration and interoperability with earlier generations of systems.

The fact is, the availability of best-in-breed access control solutions that enable legacy

systems to be upgraded and/or integrated presents a major opportunity for access control dealers and integrators to cultivate new business. There are scores of facilities across America (not to mention across the globe) that currently use outdated access control systems. The ability to cost-effectively upsell these businesses — large and small — with the latest access control functionality and



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capabilities presents a significant opportunity for new business development.

What’s more compelling is that there is no need for concern regarding the brand of legacy hardware or system topography. New software is the critical system enhancement component, and is by far the easiest component to deal with from an installation perspective. New software also holds the key for future business development with new customers who own old systems. This is especially true as users continue to employ access control systems for business operations beyond security — for example, for time and attendance.

Backwards-compatible access solutions also provide the advanced architecture for dealers and integrators to offer access control as a managed service. Access control

software makes this possible with multiple client functionality capable of managing and controlling several systems on a single backbone. Capitalizing on new software-based capabilities increases the potential for new business development as new applications for access control continue to emerge.

Access Control Is Not Just for Security Anymore

In addition to opportunities with legacy access control system users, the potential for new business development transcends traditional security system applications. In one example, a school system in Connecticut was looking for a better way to manage student traffic between a large number of portable classrooms they were using while a new facility was constructed. One of the main concerns centered on children using restrooms and other facilities located in the main school building throughout the course of the day.

School administrators wanted a way to efficiently track student movements beyond issuing conventional written hall passes. We developed a feature called “Hall Pass” that provides teachers with proximity devices they issue in lieu of conventional hall passes. Through the placement of access readers in the classrooms and at all entrances to the main school building, students are monitored with a predetermined amount of time to walk from their classroom to the building. If a student fails to report in the allocated time period, the system issues a general alert.

This is just one example of how advanced access control software can be easily programmed to provide an effective solution outside of traditional security system models.

Networking for Success

Another avenue for resellers to engage in new business development activities involves networking — in the business rather than technology sense. Independent access control resellers are typically local and/or regional in nature, which often prevents

them from competing over larger system solutions for companies and organizations with multiple facilities spread over wide geographic areas.

By networking among themselves and establishing intra-dealer partnerships, independent resellers can pool their resources to deliver local support services in their respective territories. For example, Galaxy has a reseller partner in the New England area that handles a major insurance company's facilities nationwide. The reseller is a local access control dealer that handles the main facility but does not have the resources to deploy the system in the insurance company's field offices, which are scattered across the country. To help secure the account, we introduced the reseller to a network of our resellers across the country to handle local deployments. All sales activity goes through the New England reseller's office, which maintains supervision over the main software installation at the insurance company's headquarters location.

This intra-dealer partnership arrangement enables the local dealer to efficiently support a national client. It's a win-win for the local dealer, its network of dealer partners and the end-user.

Dynamic Training

New technologies — including those that are also backwards compatible — require new techniques to ensure they are properly implemented and utilized to their fullest potential. Continued training and education is critical to ensure the long-term success of every access control reseller's business, given that technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace.

Just as technology continues to change, so should the manner in which manufacturers train their reseller partners. It is important to be sure training programs continue to evolve to meet today's challenges. In past years, training sessions (includ-

ing ours) consisted of an agenda of items that manufacturers wanted to convey to a group about our latest products. Although information on new features, implementation and installation tips is still important, it is only part of the curriculum that

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resellers need to be more efficient. The information resellers need is often quite different from what was previously covered in training sessions and technical documents.

In recent years, we have evolved

our training program to reflect real-world issues culled from input received directly from installing dealers and customers via our technical support team. We log every issue our team encounters in the field and

over the phone, and we look for trends or patterns. It is important that these issues are incorporated into training programs to address different audiences and to provide attendees with the information that they need most, without spending time on subject matter that is not entirely relevant to their responsibilities or level of expertise.

We feel that it is advantageous to conduct monthly training sessions supplemented by 8 to 10 regional training sessions throughout the year, in addition to electronic training sessions which can be conducted on line by individuals or presented to a group at any location with an Internet connection.

No Silver Bullet for Success

Success in this fast-changing industry is dependent on what you put into it; and the truth is, there is no such thing as a silver bullet.

New access control, video surveillance and security system technologies will continue to evolve and converge, providing more robust, integrated solutions that accommodate both legacy and new system installations. The key is to select the solutions that deliver the most customer satisfaction today and tomorrow, and to stay abreast of new developments so that you can implement the best solutions possible.

There are different paths resellers may take to achieve success in the access control market, but they all eventually meet at the same crossroads. ■



Robert Laughlin is President of Galaxy Control Systems. To request more information about the company, visit

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