

NEW TECHNOLOGIES CAN IMPROVE INFORMATION SHARING AND EFFICIENCY BY *Brandon Wimer*



One of the biggest headaches for a security practitioner typically is finding the most up-to-date version of an organization's security system floor plan or "as-built drawing." Is it in an old PDF on a computer used by someone who has since left? Is it in the file cabinet gathering dust? Is there a system of record with locations of device assets in the first place?

Why is this a problem? The issue is that when a stakeholder or executive needs to see the plan, it is not easy to show a current visual map. It also makes designing, planning and moves/ adds/changes inefficient for an already under-resourced team, and it makes budgeting for the year ahead difficult or inaccurate.

Why are we still in this state in 2019? There are a few factors at play here that are addressable. First, most security practitioners and facilities managers need to work with not one but several integrators to address the needs of multiple geographically dispersed sites. Integrators are essential to the planning, purchase, installation and maintenance of security technologies, but it is easy to get out of sync with them and realize that they hold the key to the castle, since they have the most recent as-builts. Second, security managers say that they have information in many places, including Visio, spreadsheets and siloed project documents, and are frustrated that it is not all in one place. Having to locate and gather all of this information creates inconsistencies and inefficiencies.

This article addresses opportunities to improve the process for the security practitioner and integrator partner alike. It puts the technology manager in a better position to rapidly meet the organization's demands, maintain a high-quality system and effectively budget for the future.

Improve Collaboration With Integrator Partners

Systems integrators are a vital partner when designing, procuring, installing and maintaining security and IoT assets. However, in most cases, the information flow between security technology managers and their integrator and vendor partners leaves much to be desired. It all starts with the site survey. This is where you walk the site with your integrator and talk about precisely what you need. The question is: Did they record this information accurately and completely? Nine out of 10 integrators still do this by

using a paper floor plan and drawing in the needs and taking some pictures. Unfortunately for the customer, they miss a lot of information this way and often come back several times with an inaccurate proposal. Moreover, once they do get it right, it is not easy to share a CAD plan or detailed engineering document. That is when you lose a bit of control.

What if you could communicate more effectively and visualize the planning process? What if all of the information could be captured in one place? These capabilities are critical because the use of paper, spreadsheets and cameras is inadequate to meet the demands of internal customers.

Security practitioners and systems integrators need to work together to move forward and embrace new technologies that help them collaborate and deploy technologies efficiently and quickly. As an example, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, students working with the police's IT department have not only mapped all of the surveillance cameras on campus using a digital design tool, they have made it possible to capture site surveys when areas need new video surveillance cameras, making it easier to collaborate with integrators and vendors to rapidly meet the institution's demands.

Embracing Technology to Gather Information

Both security managers and integrators say they are using multiple tools to gather information – sometimes five or six to address all of the system needs. While paper floor plans and traditional information gathering approaches are familiar and comfortable, they are causing hours of inefficiency. Today's mobile tablets, integrated cameras and apps can be game changers for gathering details more effectively in one place.

Along with the development of industry-specific apps, the proliferation of cloud-based security as a service makes it easier for security practitioners and their technology managers to securely share information with their team of integrators. Uploading and sharing documents, photos, data, and spreadsheets through the cloud makes it easier for integrators to quickly and accurately collect details for every project. Security professionals and integrators can now bring all of the information together in one place, making the collaboration process more efficient.

Establishing Consistency

Electronic security systems are part of the massive proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies. They are IP-based devices that need to be implemented, maintained and managed to end-of-life. From a security practitioner's standpoint, the technological changes are all coming fast and furiously, even as they have to find ways to do more with fewer resources. One area of opportunity is to improve the management of security and IoT. Several facilities managers at large, multi-site enterprises have said that every location has a different way of sharing information. This represents another opportunity to standardize information sharing so that when a new hire comes on, that person can be brought up to speed quickly.

Take, for example, a financial institution that acquired more than 50 branches in a year's time. The security director needed to implement the standard security framework to ensure branch compliance, conduct the budgeting for new technology and plan for the implementation with various integrators and vendors covering different geographic areas. This type of situation requires consistency and access to plans to understand precisely what security assets are in place and how they can be managed.

Improving Control Over System Delivery

It is time for the industry to embrace better ways to manage critical security systems and other IoT assets. The good news is that it is a win-win-win situation for security managers, integrators and vendors. If each of the key players in the ecosystem more effectively shares information, designs systems accurately and transparently (and securely), and collaborates on digital plans, there is much to gain for everyone involved. Most importantly, this allows security practitioners to most efficiently and effectively do what they do best: keep people and property safe and sound.

*Brandon Wimer (bwimer@systemsurveyor.com) is the digital marketing manager for **System Surveyor**.*