

VOICE OF *Experience*

Brook Security's Managing Director, Terry Roffey, shares the changes he has seen, and the lessons he has learned over decades of experience in the security industry

In the year of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, it is also my Golden Anniversary, working in the security industry for 50 years, and how technology has changed in that time.

For me, it all began in Hatton Place where I started my apprenticeship sitting out on window ledges, 5 storeys up, fitting an alarm sounder with a hammer and rawplug tool, a sharp hardened screwdriver to bash into a brick.

In 1972, Intruder Alarm Systems were battery powered, with CCTV non-existent in everyday premises and exclusively used in cities and banks. Homes had pressure mats under carpets, micro switches fitted to doors, metallic foil on windows and either a direct BT line from the client's premises to the Monitoring Station, or a record player

connected to a telephone line that dialled 999, and played a recorded message. Looking back now, it was such basic technology.

Fast forward to 1989, I was living and working in Kent running a local security company that had expanded to 4 offices in the South East. The business had won a national contract and needed to expand geographically, which required financing. The route we took was to float the company on the London Stock Market, which facilitated several more acquisitions resulting, in a national company with 25 offices, 450 staff, 35,000 clients and a turnover of £20 million.

By the mid 90s CCTV surveillance had become popular,



using analogue TV line resolution images. Recording was on a video tape with a 3-foot-tall tape holder and 31 tapes to manage and rotate. Crime Watch became infamous for grainy CCTV footage where a person could be seen entering an off-licence and the next minute, jumping over the counter attacking staff. Although advancements had been made, there were often still large gaps in the recorded footage.

The business I was running was acquired by a global security provider and I was no longer part of the set up. At nearly 40 years of age, I wondered if my career had ended or whether it was a new chapter. I found a small business in Kent that had 700 clients and worked in a tight geographical area. The challenge was to go back to the shop floor, understand technology and the new European Standards we were expected to work to.

25 years on, today Brook Security has in excess of 5,000 clients across London and the South East and we have achieved the highest accreditation in our industry, National Security Inspectorate (NSI) NACOSS Gold for intruder alarm, CCTV and access control systems.

The biggest change I've seen over the years, has been in technology, and undoubtedly the single biggest change, is the use of "Smart Devices", with Apps to run our lives.

Homeowners can now set and disarm their intruder alarm systems from wherever they are. CCTV can be viewed from anywhere in the world, remotely monitored with the option for live audio challenges by an operator viewing the live footage.

The use of wireless technology for intruder alarms has enabled us to protect a Claude Monet painting 24 hours a day, when the client, or their staff are not in residence. We made sure that it was handled by a specialist before we fitted a security device to the frame.

15 years ago, we were asked to fit a "Transponder" to a Bugatti Veyron so the client's driveway gates would open automatically on approach. We supplied the device for his mechanics team to fit in the car. Again, advances in technology mean today we could do the same job by using an ANPR CCTV Camera and building a "White List" of recognised vehicles for the gates to open.

Understanding standards and best practice is now, I feel, crucial in our technology heavy industry. So, when quoting any tailored security solution it will begin with a "Risk Assessment," of the premises and what the prospective client wants to keep safe to answer the raft of questions each new contract brings. Are there any insurance requirements to be met that may form part of the insurance content cover



warranty? What grade of intruder alarm is required? Can it be a wireless technology solution?

How far can a CCTV camera see? How big is the target image when you are playing a recording back in the event of an incident?

The first question following a serious crime, break-in, accident or incident is “Is there CCTV footage?” Hopefully there is, but it will need to be fit for purpose, with good quality recording, the correct size of image and the actual incident captured.

When I am in the market for a product or service, I want to know and understand all my options and how they compare in price and performance.

For me to advise a prospective client on security matters, I need to know what is available on the market, which of those products work well in different applications and if they have

been proven over time and in different settings.

In order to know these answers and ultimately give the best advice, I also volunteer some of my time as Chairman of the South East Region of NSI, where there are around 100 installing companies. This also allows me to pay it forward, sharing my experiences with other newbies in the security industry.

50 years on, and the job is still varied, with different requirements met by tailored solutions. The benefit of age and experience is that we will have probably done something similar at some stage, meaning we know what it is that we need to do, to give clients the right level of protection.

It's the layers of security and how they are used which make all the difference.

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