



The Death of Patrols

By T. Legion

Moore's Law: "The number of transistors that can be placed inexpensively on an integrated circuit will double every two years."

It is an omnipresent fact that technological change is occurring at an ever-increasing rate. Moore's Law, first coined in the early 1970s to describe change in transistor technology, has now progressed to doubling every eighteen months. Futurists predict that by 2020, exponential improvement described by Moore's Law will ultimately lead to what has been termed 'technological singularity', a period where progress in technology generally occurs almost instantly. The quote, "The best thing about the future is it comes only one day at a time" fails to take into account this period of singularity, a period some believe will outstrip mankind's ability to adapt and in fact survive its own technology!

Business's ability to survive such change is already littered with the skeletons of companies that would not or could not adapt and were left wallowing in the tar pits of the recent past. Remember Kodak, a global company over one hundred years old, producing photographic film? In 2000,

Kodak's Australian division was making \$56 million a year profit, by 2002 this had dropped to just \$615,000 a year. By 2004, it had effectively disappeared from the Australian business landscape. Why did a household name such as Kodak vanish more quickly than a burp in a cyclone? Kodak was wrong-footed by a technology that it had helped create; it held onto an old and proven technology (photographic film and cameras) even when it was evident that the digital stuff the guys in research and development had been helping develop in the basement was a cleaner, faster, easier to use and more economical product.

The inability to fully embrace technological change can provoke massive shifts in the value of old, trusted and established business models. Looking at the changes in the way people consume media, the way people advertise, how they communicate, or the way they commute is enough for anyone to understand how important it is to future-proof a business.

It is interesting to watch the 'Kodak moment' developing in relation to the use of technology within the global security community. Established models such as patrols, the mainstay of responding to traditional alarms or securing after-hours infrastructure, is a classic

example. The advent of CCTV technology is increasingly being used to conduct virtual patrols. These patrols are conducted by trained operators using Web-enabled CCTV cameras. This technology enables these staff to be alerted to movement or access to secure buildings or areas and make a judgement call on what is happening, safely from within their A1-graded alarm bunker. On confirmation of a crime, they can then elect to send police or follow established procedures to solve the issue. Expensive solution... maybe, but costs are a bit like time and gravity, time always pulls it down! The advent of cheaper cameras, cheaper and faster communication and movement-detection software has merged to provide an emerging solution that pushes society one step closer to Orwell's Brave New World. This technology negates the need for human resource at a location, or for the scheduled walk-through of a building. It is safer, costs less and, when linked to movement-detection software, is more reliable than a human resource. But, like all technology, it does not solve every situation; for example, buildings that have 24-hour presence and movement need the human element constantly onsite, but negates most of the need of a patrol for empty buildings or for alarm response.

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Not convinced that the classic security model of patrols is like a dead man walking on the Green Mile? The silver bullet comes in the form of the first convergence of the traditional PIR (passive infrared sensor) with a CCTV camera. Like most revolutionary ideas, it is a combination of old technology with new; a combination of technological advancement with logical progression of thought. With clear statistical evidence that up to 98% of alarm responses are to false alarms, this new product is set to revolutionize traditional security models and kill off a service problem of the security industry – the patrol industry.

When the IR-illuminated camera PIR is activated, this product takes a ten-second video clip when it detects movement. The clip is then encrypted and sent to a phone or monitoring station where it is decrypted and viewed. This visual verification of what is happening ensures patrol officers are not dispatched to the cat, a flapping curtain, bird or other non-threatening issue. In the event that the images catch a criminal act, police can be contacted directly and sent to a verified crime.

With another major national patrol company facing an ACCC (Australian Competition

and Consumer Commission) investigation for allegedly failing to meet its contracted patrol requirements, a solution has long been overdue (a distinct need exists). This company and others have been investing in technology to make the patrol officer more accountable and efficient in response. In-car terminals and end-to-end communication, satellite tracking and satellite navigation are all leading-edge applications and have long been overdue in this sector of the security market. What this technology does not take into account is that in using the new camera PIRs, the patrol officer does not need to respond in the majority of circumstances. If a verifiable crime is taking place, police can be called to respond immediately.

Patrol models of generating revenue and profit have long been based on a flat minute rate (for locking, unlocking, general security checks and so on) and then a higher rate for alarm and emergency response to clients. In a highly competitive market, this model means most of the profit is generated by security companies from emergency response, that is, alarm call outs and so on. When the traditional monitoring stations also generate profit

from this model, a cynic could argue that the technology has not been taken up as quickly as anticipated as its revenue-saving potential to clients is not in the best interest of the current security provider's interest. Sure, there will be circumstances where the human element (the patrol officer), is required to respond, but this will be in the minority, not the majority, of times that currently exist.

There is no doubt the need exists for this technology, there is no doubt the old monitoring and response models were fundamentally flawed and had, and still have (despite the latest technology being placed in vehicles), service issues and there is no doubt that clients are seeking more efficient, reliable and cheaper ways of doing business. This convergent technology is about to wash over the security industry and sweep all old models and infrastructure before it; it is just a matter of time before the 'Kodak moment' has passed and a new level of service, new revenue models and a greater service at a more efficient price to clients becomes the norm. The question now becomes who ends up in the tar pit and who embraces this technology change to survive? ■

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