

# COVER STORY

## **Cover Story - The Changing Face of Security.**

Over the last ten years, the Australian security industry has undergone rapid and dramatic transformation. Training, standards, legislation and technology have all been effected and according to industry experts, this is just the beginning. We look at where the industry is headed in the forthcoming five to ten years.





# The changing Face of Security

***WANTED:*** Fortune 500 company seeks security professionals with university degree, excellent communications skills, a background in customer service and a solutions focused attitude. The position requires a good understanding of electronics and modern technology and a working knowledge of computer operating systems is preferred.

John Bigelow

**W**elcome to the security industry of the future. An industry where convergent technologies and growing consumer demands for better, smarter, friendlier security solutions, both physical and electronic, are the dominant driving forces behind the creation of a new breed of security professional; a dedicated professional who must be conversant in more than just the basic precepts of good security. The security professional of tomorrow will need to be smart, more business focused and familiar with a range of new technologies and security solutions, all designed to make our lives easier, safer and more secure.

The fact that the security industry, like most professional industries, seeks to evolve beyond its boundaries should come as no real surprise. What is interesting, however, is the speed at which much of the change has taken place over the last decade. Just a little over ten years ago the security industry in Australia was a fragmented and disjointed conglomerate of loosely associated yet clearly distinct sub-industries, all of which were relatively removed from public view. However, over the last decade, as security has been thrust into the public spotlight, the traditional boundaries within the industry have begun to crumble, giving rise to a new breed of multi-skilled,

university educated security professionals. These professionals will be conversant with a wide variety of security disciplines and will be able to utilise the many new and exciting emerging technologies set to change the way we live and work.

### Where Have We Come From?

There are a number of factors behind the evolution of security in Australia. Local and international security concerns, the rapidly

exclude undesirable elements from the industry and to introduce a level of accountability where none had previously existed.

Since the introduction of licensing in the later part of the last century, the security industry has come a long way. In fact, in many respects, the Australian security industry has become somewhat of a world leader in the area of private security training, being one of the first countries in the world (even before the USA and England) to introduce formal training and licensing

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changing landscape of technology in the industry and an increased awareness of security amongst the public are but a few of the factors driving change in the industry. However, one of the greatest forces for change in the industry over the last ten years has been the push by various State and Territory Governments of Australia to “clean the industry up”.

Prior to 1990, the security industry in Australia was largely unregulated. Considered by many as little more than a refuge for the unemployed or unemployable, the security industry before regulation consisted mostly of ex-criminals, bikies, gangsters and heavy handed thugs. The guarding side of the industry was also heavily populated with semi retired old men seeking easy part time employment. The one thing that all these groups had in common was a distinct lack of any real skills, knowledge or formal training. There were no laws preventing ex-convicts from selling and installing electronic security equipment and virtually anyone could put themselves forward as a security consultant capable of charging for advice on all manner of security issues regardless of their background or expertise.

However, in the wake of concerns about the competency and conduct of security personnel in Australia, various State and Territory governments sought to introduced licensing to the industry through the earlier half of the 1990s. The hope was that it would bring reform to an industry which was seen by many to be spinning out of control.

While the new licensing requirements varied greatly from state to state, the basic objectives remained the same. That is, the perceived need to introduce formal training where none had previously existed; to introduce standards to an industry where standards were sorely lacking; to

requirements for private security personnel.

However, a combination of recent international incidents, and major local events such as the 2000 Olympics, the upcoming 2006 Commonwealth Games and a multitude of smaller, yet no less important, incidents involving the security personnel and members of the public (such as the death of David Hooks in early 2004) have highlighted that the industry still has some work to do in relation to training.

### Where Are We Going?

According to Inspector Myles King, Duty Registrar of Private Agents with the Victorian Police Licensing Services Branch, “Training has been and remains at the forefront of the various state regulators’ efforts to improve the standards of the industry. Each of the States and Territories have worked hard over recent years to develop and implement new, National standards for security training – standards which will come into effect towards the middle of this year. Not only will these standards help to improve the level of professionalism and competence within the industry, but they will help us work to a more uniform level of training across the country and possibly even the future transportability of qualifications from one state to another.”

According to Phil Houlton of the NSW Security Industry Registry, the push for the introduction of standards to the security industry will not stop with training. “Regulators around Australia are currently working, and will continue to work towards, the introduction of legislation outlining standards for the industry in areas such as conduct and accountability. This is a very important step in improving the professionalism of the industry.”

According to Associate Professor Don Robertson, who runs the Australian Centre for

Security Research out of the University of Western Sydney, the introduction of standards is going to be integral to the industry’s long term future.”

The security industry is going to continue to grow at an exponential rate over the next five to ten years. The reasons behind that level of growth are many and varied. However, the industry needs to do more than simply grow, it needs to move forward. Currently, we have a situation where companies are competing in a cutthroat market, offering bottom dollar rates for services and as a result, they are delivering sub-standard services. The only way to rectify this is for the government to legislate standards specific standards governing the industry. We know it can be done because we saw it happen late last century in relation to workplace safety.

Prior to the legislation of standards governing workplace safety, business refused to fall into line, it was only after workplace safety standards were made law that things began to improve. The same is true of the security industry.

The introduction of standards governing training and education are a positive move but the government and regulators also need to look at standards for behaviour and service delivery in the industry. A step, which I believe, is inevitable. This price war mentality that the industry currently subscribes to is unsustainable in the long run.”

According to Terry Murphy, the Chief Executive of ASIAL (Australian Security Industry Association Limited) Australia’s largest security industry association, the industry has already reached a point where it can no longer sustain the ‘price war mentality’.

For the first time in a long time, the security industry is at a point where demand is beginning to outpace supply. Many companies are finding that they cannot get enough staff to fill the available contracts. This means that businesses are going to have to start realising that unless they are willing to pay decent prices for security services, they will have to go without. However, governments and industry regulators also need to understand that our industry has reached a point where it is struggling to become more than a mere service provider.”

The security industry in Australia has become a professional industry. As such, the Regulators and Government need to start valuing the relationships that exist between private security and government. There needs to be greater consultation between governments and the industry with regard to legislative changes so that we can achieve our common goals such as greater safety and security for the community.”

This is an important point as, according to Associate Professor Robinson, the community has become one of the major driving forces behind the evolution of the security industry.”

Prior to the end of the last century, the word ‘security’ held a very different and more limited meaning,” states Associate Professor Robinson. “Security, as most people viewed it, was related more closely to internal domestic issues and had very little impact on their daily lives. However, in the wake of events which have transpired on an international level over the last five years, the word ‘security’ now holds a broader and much more negative definition than it ever had for most people. Take for example, the issue of national security. Five years ago, outside of a few government agencies, the issue of national security was not even on most people’s radar. Now, however, national security is one of the foremost topics in the public domain – to the point where elections are being won or lost over the matter.

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Corporate security, a matter once reserved for those select companies which dealt in sensitive information or who ran operations in dangerous regions, has now become a concern at board level, impacting most medium to large companies. We are also seeing greater emphasis being placed on security within our schools and universities, within our communities and our homes and we are seeing a growing trend towards personal security (Close Personal Protection) amongst our politicians, the business sector and other various affluent groups within our country. What this translates into is a growing emphasis on security with a need for more highly, educated, skilled and trained professionals.”

According to Mark Jarratt, President of the Australian Chapter ASIS (the American Society for Industrial Security), one of the largest security associations in the world, the growing focus on professionalism within the security industry has led to a significant change in the general perception of security as a legitimate career choice.

“Ten or twenty years ago, the only people who considered a career in security were ex-military, law enforcement or government personnel. Most people thought of security, (if they thought of it at all), as being some old guy sitting outside a bank. However, as the industry strives to improve itself, we have seen the introduction of a number of tertiary level courses, from diploma level right

through to Bachelors, Masters and even PhD level courses. Some association like ASIS have even begun to introduce industry recognised professional accreditations such as, the ASIS Certified Protection Professional (CPP) and Certified Fraud Investigator (CFI) accreditations.”

What this means for the industry, is that we now have a legitimate career path in the industry. No longer is it the case that a security guard comes into the industry, stands in front of a bank for a few months and then leaves to pursue another career. These days, a person can come into the industry with an entry level qualification such as Certificate II in Security Guarding, and they can slowly work their way up through the ranks, perhaps attaining a University degree in security management and going on to become a security manager for a Fortune 500 organisation. People in the industry now have somewhere to go!

“More importantly, however, I believe that over the next few years, as the industry continues to

grow, we will begin to see young people leaving school and entering university who choose to study security as their chosen career option.”

We are definitely beginning to move away from the traditional ‘3G’ (Guards, Guns and Gates) mentality of old and develop a more rounded approach to security,” states Mr. Jarratt. “The introduction of university level degrees has also added an air of legitimacy to the industry. The security professionals of tomorrow will be young, university educated and career oriented individuals with a wider understanding of a range of disciplines within the industry.”

### Technology

While the industry has undergone radical reform by way of training and regulation over the last decade, technology has had a major impact on the industry, moving forward in leaps and bounds. The older analogue technologies which served the industry so well throughout the later



half of the last century have given way to the digital revolution of the new millennium.

Traditionally stand-alone systems such as access control, CCTV and intrusion detection systems can now be controlled and networked via PCs. Then, of course, there is the rapid proliferation of the PC and the explosive growth of the Internet over the last decade – a combination which has created a veritable flood of security issues leading to the birth of a new breed of security professional – the information security officer.

However, both the emergence of the IT security professional and the migration of traditional analogue security technologies to more advanced digital systems has created an interesting conundrum for the modern security industry.

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### When worlds collide

Where once there stood two clearly defined streams within the security realm, the convergence of security technology with information technology has created a situation where these two separate streams of security have seemingly begun to collide, leaving many in the industry confused as to how best to tackle the situation. Given that today's security systems such as access control, CCTV and intrusion detection can, and in most cases are being, networked and incorporated into an organisation's IT infrastructure, the question arises as to where the ultimate responsibility for security should lie.

On the one hand, we have the physical security professional. This person supposedly has extensive knowledge of such physical security principles as defence in depth, system design, lighting, camera placement and coverage, access control and so on. In most cases, however, the physical security professional has a very limited understanding of IT systems and IT security principles.

On the other hand, there is the IT security professional who is highly knowledgeable in such areas as network vulnerabilities, system hardening, bandwidth management, firewalls, virus protection and so on, but no real understanding of the physical security realm. In fact, many IT security professionals become so engrossed in protecting the cyber realm that they often tend to forget that the best firewall in the world cannot protect their servers from a well aimed brick. Similarly, many physical security experts are in such a rush to make the transition from analogue to digital

systems, due to the many benefits such systems offer, that they tend to forget that if not properly protected, any hacker worth their salt may be able to hijack the entire security system.

What needs to be established is a middle ground; a basic understanding of both security disciplines including their limitations and capabilities – a holistic approach to security if you will. According to Mark Jarrett, this is where the young blood entering the industry through universities will have a major impact.

“Younger people tend to have an almost innate understanding of computers as they have been raised in a world where computers are as much a part of their every day life as cars and sport. This puts them in the enviable position of being

able to bridge the gap between the physical and virtual security realms.”

According to Kevin Foster of Connell Wagner, one of Australia's largest security engineering firms, this ability to bridge the physical and technological divide is going to be a crucial skill for the security professional of the future.

“Technology will play a massive role in the future of the security. Manufacturers around the world are constantly locked in a race to see who can come up with newer, better, more efficient ways of saving us time and effort while keeping us safe in our homes and at our places of work.”

“Technologies, such as digital CCTV, are still a long way from being the best they can be. However, advances in computing power and software mean that we will see significant improvements in not just the quality of images being broadcast via digital CCTV but also in the way it is being utilized in the security sector. We are starting to see manufacturers doing some pretty smart things with CCTV. Motion detection, for example, is about to go through a quantum leap in capabilities. Advances in digital signal processing will enable us to use video motion technology in outdoor applications where it has traditionally been unreliable. We might also expect to see similar advances in other areas such as facial recognition for example.”

There is also a strong push amongst manufacturers towards the development of automation technology. This push towards automation combined with digital conversion and miniaturisation of current security technologies

such as cameras, access control, intrusion detection and biometric systems is leading towards a future where security systems will become invisible. Security systems of the future will blend quietly and seamlessly into the background of daily life.

In the future, we will be able to walk into our office buildings or homes where we will be immediately recognised by the security systems without having to interact with them in any way. Once inside a building, a person might enter a lift which, without instruction, will deliver them to the correct office floor. On entering the office, a person will find the lights are already on at a specified lighting level, chosen music is playing in the background and the computer is on, downloading email. Visitors will be guided to the appropriate areas of the building by automated systems. In the retail market, invisible security systems will monitor customers, scan the area for known shop lifters. They will even direct sales staff to customers in need of assistance as a result of analysing their body language and possibly, be able to provide sales staff with a customer's name and shopping preferences. And so, should any of these seemingly magic systems break down, a highly educated, professional and skilled university graduate will be at hand to fix your problems, answer your questions and advise you on the possible security solutions.

### Changing attitudes

There can be little doubt that the security industry in Australia has come a long way over the last ten to fifteen years. However, the journey is far from over. It is up to the industry to continue to improve and show the community that it is the professional, educated industry it professes to be.

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The advances in technology, the quest for better standards throughout the industry, the introduction of properly accredited qualifications at all levels of education and the campaign to have security seen as a legitimate part of the business model in the modern world are all positive steps in redefining the changing face of security in Australia. What matters most at present, however, is where the industry chooses to go from here. ■