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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SECURITY SYSTEMS &

Yes, iCan

With the iPhone, as well as a number of other devices, dealer Craig Metzger of GuardMe Security helps his customers stay connected and in control of their security systems.



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TOTAL CONTROL

When your customer has 17 locations at which they must manage security, they need a solution that uses the latest communication technology to give them total control from anywhere they need it.

By Joan Engebretson, Contributing Writer

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Everyone is trying to do more with less these days, and that's where technology steps in to help. Especially during the current recession, dealers need optimal efficiency in their operations departments and their customers need solutions that can help them run cost-effective security operations. Some solutions accomplish both objectives, and those are the ones that are most valuable to dealers like GuardMe Security, Old Bridge, N.J.

Case in point: GuardMe uses Honeywell's VISTA-128FBP control panel with a Honeywell 7845i-GSM communicator, which uses a high-speed cellular network connection for communication. GuardMe also

GuardMe Security's Craig Metzger (top) demonstrates the use of Honeywell's My Keypad application (left) on an iPhone™, which he implemented for a customer with 17 locations.

sells the features and benefits of Honeywell's Total Connect services to its customers, such as Sixth Avenue Electronics. With Total Connect, customers capitalize on the benefits of digital technology to control their security systems, receive alerts remotely, and more — using the Internet, PDAs, cellular phones and other Web-enabled devices.

Security is critical for Sixth Avenue Electronics, an electronics retailer with 17 locations in the northeastern United States. As Steven Hayes, director of Security & Loss Prevention for the company, explains, “We sell all consumer electronics — cameras, camcorders, televisions, GPSs, iPods, cameras, cell phones. You name it; we've got it.”

That type of merchandise can be particularly attractive to thieves — and with locations measuring in the range of 25,000 to 50,000 square feet, Sixth Avenue Electronics has a lot of merchandise to protect. Until recently, the company's security needs were complicated by the fact that it was served by different security dealers in different areas — and virtually every dealer had chosen a different type of equipment.

About 18 months ago, management at Sixth Avenue Electronics decided there had to be a better way. “They came to us looking for a solution to consolidate their suppliers,” recalls Craig Metzger, president of GuardMe Security, which at the time provided security for two of Sixth Avenue's locations. “Most importantly, they wanted to centralize system management and give themselves complete control of the system remotely.”

Sixth Avenue Electronics has begun replacing its hodgepodge of security systems with a consistent platform based on Honeywell's VISTA-128FBP control panel with a Honeywell 7845i-GSM communicator, which uses the Internet and a high-speed cellular network connection for communications. All of the systems can be remotely controlled by authorized users through an Internet browser, and system alerts are automatically sent to those users through e-mail or short message service (SMS).

“The end user is able to set the parameters of when and why they wish to be notified and where,” Metzger explains.

Upgrades to the Honeywell platform are being made as the client's contracts with previous dealers expire. In addition, Sixth Avenue Electronics opens a new location about every two months, and all of that business is going to GuardMe.

REMOTE ACCESS IS KEY

The system upgrades that GuardMe is making for Sixth Avenue have simplified, yet enhanced the security management process for the client. Authorized employees at Sixth Avenue use their credentials to log in to the AlarmNet Direct Web site, where they see a drop-down menu of their existing sites. “They select a site and now they are into that site remotely and can make any changes that are needed,” explains John Rizzo, field supervisor for GuardMe.

“They use it daily for opening store locations,” Metzger notes. “When a manager is out sick or late, they can arm and disarm the system remotely.”

Previously, if an employee was terminated, security personnel would have had to drive to the location to delete that employee's security code — and in some cases, the driving time involved several hours in each direction. “Now, rather than drive out to that location, the director of security is able to delete that code immediately from his Blackberry® or personal computer,” Metzger says. “It saves a tremendous amount of time and financial resources by not having to go there.”

The new system also lets senior management at Sixth Avenue Electronics keep closer tabs on operations at individual locations. Management can receive alerts if, for example, a location opens late or closes early. “Previously, if they had a problem, they were at the mercy of the store's local management to inform senior management on their own that the stores were late to open,” Metzger explains. “Now senior management is automatically notified by



PHOTO COURTESY OF HONEYWELL

GuardMe Security provided a standardized single platform for a customer with 17 consumer electronics stores, Sixth Avenue Electronics.

TOTAL CONTROL

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Through Honeywell's Total Connect Services that are accessed through a PC or mobile device, the end user is able to empower its management to operate and control security at all of its stores without being at a keypad or calling in its security dealer.

e-mail and they can determine if it becomes excessive.”

Before Total Connect was installed, one Sixth Avenue location had excessive user error, resulting from employees who hadn't been properly trained on the system. That location had so many false alarms, the system was put out of service by the police and the company was called in for a mandatory court appearance.

“Senior management wasn't aware of any of this until the company was experiencing severe municipal issues,” Metzger relates.

With the new system, problems of that nature are a thing of the past, he says. “We avoid it by notification through Total Connect, which lets them know when the system is in alarm, along with any faults and troubles in the system.”

Previously, Hayes had to rely on store management to let him know if a system required service. Now trouble alerts and faults are sent directly to him, facilitating the service process.

Total Connect communications has been made possible by the widespread deployment of GSM cellular technology supporting data communications. Each iGSM communicator is pre-programmed to connect with a centralized facility operated by Honeywell, which transmits alarms and alerts to the central station monitoring the end user account. GuardMe, for example, operates its own central station. From there, e-mails or text messages are automatically transmitted to authorized end users per the client's pre-programmed instructions, and operators can dispatch police or emergency personnel, as appropriate.

Installing the GSM communicators is an easy task for GuardMe installers. “We have found that programming them in-house cuts down on installation time,” Rizzo relates. “Normally we can provide them pre-programmed to our technicians to take them to a job, install them and by the time they mount it on the wall, the unit's normally ready to send signals and be tested in with the central station.”

THE 'PIZZAZZ' FACTOR

Sixth Avenue Electronics made the decision to consolidate its security needs with GuardMe, in part,

because management liked the idea of Total Connect and, in part, based on its previous experience with GuardMe. Hayes was particularly impressed with the installation that GuardMe did at one of Sixth Avenue's warehouses in Springfield, N.J.

“That system offered glass-break sensors, motion sensors, contacts on all the doors and made it so that within my warehouse compound, anywhere you were to step within three feet, you would set off a motion sensor somewhere,” Hayes recalls.

As each new location is converted to Total Connect, GuardMe occasionally is able to reuse existing sensors, but typically installs new equipment. In addition to the Honeywell panel, a typical installation includes a keypad, fire annunciator, full perimeter protection on doors and windows, glass-break sensors and full interior motion detection. The platform also uses Honeywell's V-Plex® polling technology. Rather than requiring separate homerun connections for each protection zone, V-Plex® uses a single polling loop that enables installers to configure zones through software. This simplifies the installation process and adds a higher level of flexibility.

“For facilities with so many square feet, V-Plex® is the right way to go to make the installation process simpler and give full descriptions throughout the facility,” Metzger believes.

Hayes and some other authorized Sixth Avenue personnel typically use portable wireless devices,

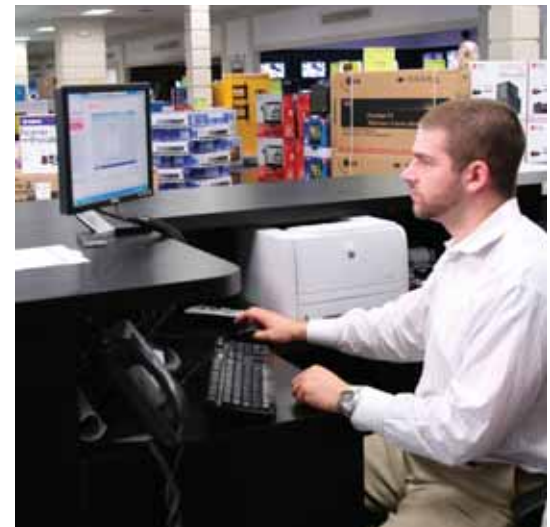


PHOTO COURTESY OF HONEYWELL

Sixth Avenue Electronics' Steven Hayes uses Total Connect Services to alert him if the security systems at any one of the company's retail stores has had an alarm, or has generated a trouble or fault condition, among other things.

such as a Blackberry® or iPhone™ to interact with the security system. Interfaces are available for download to either of those devices to provide a graphical user interface that resembles the Honeywell keypad installed at each location.

“With Total Connect’s unique and easy-to-use keypad interfaces, Sixth Avenue is able to empower its management to reach out to their stores without any additional training,” notes Gordon G. Hope Jr., Honeywell’s general manager for AlarmNet.

The iPhone™ interface, dubbed My Keypad, is particularly appealing, Metzger says. “My Keypad is fantastic,” he says. “The graphics are phenomenal. It’s an exact replica of the Honeywell keypad and through that application you have full access to the system.”

UPGRADE-WORTHY

Although Sixth Avenue Electronics has not integrated its video and access control systems with Total Connect, that is another option. Clients choosing that option are able to, for example, have video automatically streamed to their computer or wireless device in response to pre-programmed events such as when a system is armed or disarmed. Capabilities such as that, coupled with user-friendly interfaces such as the iPhone™ screen, have generated strong interest from other established GuardMe customers.

“It’s becoming a very popular add-on for our existing customer base,” Metzger notes, “and we’re finding that prospects are just as interested residentially as commercially.”

GuardMe now mentions Total Connect on every sales call. In addition, the company has included with customer invoices



PHOTO COURTESY OF HONEYWELL

Linking video and access control functions with Total Connect are options that customers can take advantage of with GuardMe Security.

a tri-fold brochure explaining the features and benefits of Total Connect. In the near future, GuardMe salespeople will begin contacting existing customers directly to discuss Total Connect.

At a time when new construction has slowed, GuardMe’s experience with Sixth Avenue Electronics is an excellent example of how a company can generate revenues from its existing base. In this case, GuardMe not only generated new equipment sales at locations where it already had systems. In addition, the lure of a centralized, consistent security platform was strong enough to persuade the client to convert other locations to Total Connect — and to GuardMe. ■

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