

## OPINION

### Let's Get Access Control off the Wall



By Isac Tabib

Let's face it — we've all been there, whether as integrators, consultants, end-users or manufacturers. In an era in which electronic controllers are becoming smaller and more powerful, in which IT data centers are becoming more sophisticated, we, in the access control industry are still using hardware controllers that are a decade old. To date, a tangible solution for installing access control systems efficiently has not been initiated. Why?

During my career as a security integrator and after having designed and installed many large, enterprise-level security systems, the common issues that consistently arose were the costly, time-intensive labor efforts required to deliver an access control system.

The installation of a typical electronic access control door requires a minimum of four cables for: a card reader, a door position switch, a request-to-exit (REX) device, and an electrified lock. One of the two installation methods is an above-door controller with door device wires that locally connect to a controller, which creates many commissioning and service issues. The second method is wall-mounted controllers located centrally in telecom/data closets where wires are run from door devices to closet controllers. Many consultants, end users and integrators favor the second method of centralized telecom/data and security closets for equipment mounting, because it negates the installation and commissioning issues of above-door controller mounting.

Regardless, the installation of above-door or centralized controllers is a costly and time-consuming process. Integrators must consider the need for mounting fire-rated painted plywood on walls, ship heavy and bulky metal enclosures, cable management troughs, electrical power, network connections, fire alarm connections, conduits, core

drilling, etc. So, why are we doing it?

The answer is that there is no real alternative. Some manufacturers have made attempts to simplify installations; however, in the era of touch screens, voice commands and iPhones, we in the security industry generally are lagging behind current technologies.

As security integrators, the necessity for wall space and "real estate" within the IT telecom/data closet is a constant challenge, and a sure source of friction with our IT counterparts. IT professionals don't want our equipment to be wall-mounted, and neither should we! The desire for security equipment to be neatly installed in the same manner as all other data and network equipment — floor-mounted, full-sided, free standing 19-in. cabinets — should be the norm.

Getting security equipment "off the wall" is not an off-the-wall idea. Rather, it is a concept whose time has come.

The required solution is for small, low-power, modular, rack-mountable controllers that fit easily within standard 19-in. data-style racks. This approach will make security equipment data-center compliant and bring greater acceptance to our industry. Additionally, security controllers should be easy to install, terminate, program and maintain. Controllers should provide ample status indicators, diagnostics, and remote diagnostics for system commissioning and ongoing remote maintenance. This approach to technology is integrator-, technician-, manufacturer- and end-user friendly and leads to an ease of installation, less maintenance and increased revenue via customer satisfaction.

The trend to get off the wall will gain momentum as savvy integrators, consultants, manufacturers and end users recognize the true costs of installing currently designed systems that include fire-rated plywood, hoist-

ing, painting, power, cable management trough, controllers and their needed support infrastructure, shipping, warehousing, cost of wall space, and installation labor.

I have met several manufacturers who recognize the challenges and opportunities this new approach brings, and are taking the necessary steps to get the industry "off the wall." I have seen innovative solutions across the spectrum:

- a 19-in. wide, 1U to 4U controller with built-in power supplies,
- taking existing controllers and mounting them onto 19-in. horizontal pullout trays, and
- a new generation of intelligent solutions that involve the redesign of current controllers.

These new controllers promise to meet new and exciting challenges and opportunities, and eventually bring the security industry to new levels of sophistication and acceptance as on par players in the convergence and IT world.

Consider what your life would be like "off the wall."

*Isac Tabib has more than 30 years of experience in the integrated security industry. He is credited with providing advanced technological security solutions, as well as strategic analysis and consultation to government agencies, municipalities and private enterprises. Tabib founded Antar-Com Inc., a tier-one security systems integrator headquartered in White Plains, N.Y.*

*The editors would like to hear your comments about off-the-wall technology. Write to SDM at [stepanek1@bnpmmedia.com](mailto:stepanek1@bnpmmedia.com), or fax a note to (248) 502-1031.*