

PROMOTING THE PARTNERSHIPS

Using the best security equipment available

By Ralph C. Jensen



If you are an integrator, you want the best solution available. An end user certainly wants the best product serving their needs, and the consultant wants to have the pulse of the manufacturing and technology industry.

Selecting an enterprise security system is a little bit like buying a car. When buying a car, you choose the make and model of the vehicle, you choose tires made by a well-known manufacturer and recommended for the vehicle, and an audio system probably by a manufacturer outside the automotive industry. This way, you can get the best-of-breed approach.

The same is true when planning a security system.

If you're looking for the optimal solution in each area, the best-of-breed option usually offers the end user richer functionality—satisfying more users. Yes, it may cost a little more money, but in the long haul your new system is getting the best the market has to offer, and you may save costs overall.

Single-source providers offer commonality and consistency so that all parts of the system have a familiar look and feel. There can be a downside, including anemic functionality, due to a lack of features, causing users to become somewhat disgruntled.

Best-of-breed systems are designed to excel in their chosen area. The camera you install will be manufactured by a company that specializes in cameras. The access control function comes from an expert in that field, while the video management solution is coming from a software specialty company.

“Best-of-breed systems are an important part of the emerging market,” said Jason Schimpf, director of partner relations at Arecont Vision. “Globally, security professionals are seeing security emerging the same way the IP market grew several years ago. One of the



“Generally speaking, you will find that it is the smaller companies that offer best-of-breed products,” said Brian Carle, director of product strategy at Salient Systems. “The entire effort of our company is focused on one thing: video management software. We have to make sure we're offering the best VMS to our customers because this is the glue that integrates the entire security system.”

A case in point would be the Miami International Airport, which recently overhauled its entire security system, executing a layered approach to its best-of-breed installation.

“MIA is the largest U.S. gateway for Latin America and the Caribbean, and is one of the leading international passenger and freight airports in the world,”

key advantages of a best-of-breed solution is having an expert point of contact for each specific component, rather than a generalist for all components of the system.”

Best-of-breed systems excel but that also may mean increased training and support, and perhaps complex interfaces with other systems. However, companies that focus on best of breed usually offer increased training and support, classes and reviews. With a best-of-breed system, the specialized features can create a competitive advantage, serving to cut costs and increase revenue.

said Ray Davalos, airport building system manager. “Passenger and employee safety is our number-one concern and this is a one-of-a-kind integration. Most facilities try to make someone's project offering fit and modify their operations to make it work.

“MIA engineering and GTSI have taken the best of today's cutting-edge technologies and truly integrated them for a solution that enhances MIA's operational and security needs. As history repeats itself, many will likely want to copy this approach in the future. A standard is being set here.”

Integrator GTSI, based in Herndon, Va., installed new surveillance cameras on the interior and exterior, and also integrated its existing surveillance infrastructure into NICE Systems' NiceVision VMS. Despite several challenges, the integrator addressed video retention during the upgrade and tested the product prior to installation.

“If you buy one manufacturer's out-of-the box solution, the tendency is that it may overlook a layered approach,” said Mark Storek, a client executive with GTSI. “The key at Miami International was to bring in best of breed in every category, vet those technologies and integrate them so that they played well together and could do things like eliminate false positives. If you get a lot of false positives, the tendency is for an operator to either lessen sensitivity or shut it off altogether. If you're getting quality data and it's being vetted by more than one technology in a layered approach, I think you eliminate a lot of that.”

Best of breed means support for the consultant and the integrator.

“As a best-of-breed manufacturer, we work well together with other best-of-breed manufacturers; we actually depend upon each other, all of us becoming

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BEST OF BREED

strong partners," Schimpf said. "That's why we developed our MegaLab, to test interoperability before it goes to the installer. We build strong relationships and our products complement other best-of-breed products."

The same goes for the software side of the best-of-breed world, said Carle, who also said that because best of breed is so interdependent upon other facets of the security world, integrators, consultants and other manufacturers have access to software, cameras and access control systems.

"Our goals are the same for either the large or small integrator," Carle said. "Best of breed comes back to the needs of the customer; and, we believe customers require and want a rich feature set of tools for their security needs."

According to Carle, some of the best-of-breed benefits may include:

- Focused manufacturers are more likely to have better quality products with more features because the entire research and development effort and company is focused on one product category.
- Pricing is likely to be more competitive across the board because a focused manufacturer only competes in one space. A total-solution provider may have one or more components of a total security solution overpriced compared to similar products from a focused vendor because of the perceived value of being able to obtain a total solution from a single source.
- A best-of-breed solution goes further to avoid vendor lock-in. A VMS developed by a camera manufacturer may only support that vendor's camera line. Having products that support complimentary technologies from multiple vendors allows for greater selection of cameras, VMS and access control. As an organization's needs change, a single component of the security solution can more easily be replaced using best-of-breed products with broad integrations.
- A greater product selection is available to consumers when using best-of-breed vendors. By mixing and matching compatible products from multiple vendors, it is more likely that each component of the security system will closely match the customer's needs and budget.

A total security solution does have its benefits, which include a simplified system design where there is one point of contact for designing a system and sourcing components, and a single point of support for the entire system. However, consumers may assume the products are developed in-house by the same engineering team; and, therefore, integrate well, but that is not always the case as some components come from acquisitions of other companies or are OEM'd from a third-party company and rebranded.

It is critical that all products have a consistent interface, integrate well and that the company can provide competent support on all products in a lineup.

"What end users want is the best total solution for the best price," Schimpf said. "We believe that happens when integrators implement best-of-breed technology."

"You also will see that the sales teams from best-of-breed innovators are experts in what they are selling and how it will operate with other parts of the solution. We actively work with other best-of-breed companies, developing business solutions together."

The question is asked, then, can best-of-breed components integrate with total solutions products? Yes, and it is a fairly new development, thanks to physical security information management (PSIM), a software that provides a platform and applications created by middle ware developers. It is designed to integrate multiple unconnected security applications and devices, controlling them through one user interface.

PSIM collects and correlates events from existing disparate security devices and information systems to empower staff to identify and proactively resolve situations. PSIM integration enables numerous organizational benefits, including increased control, improved situational awareness and management reporting.

Best of breed has been working well for years in the IT space and among other industries. When you connect the best products in the industry together, everything seems to run pretty smoothly. If you shred the right front tire during your commute, you call the tire dealer, not the auto manufacturer, and viola, it's all about best of breed.

Ralph C. Jensen is the editor-in-chief of Security Products magazine.

