

By Ralph C. Jensen



MORE THAN A CONCEPT



Integration of security systems is more than a concept or plan for Jeff Comeaux. It has become a passion and a calling. For the past 8-plus years, Comeaux and his I3Concepts team have taken the Dallas area by storm, currently working in as many as 250 buildings in the Metroplex.

Small, but nimble, I3Concepts (I3C) has 36 employees, including more than a dozen service techs and 36 employees doing the work of similar, but larger integrators in the area. Comeaux and his staff office in a low-rise building, operating on several floors, but there is movement in the works to bring the staff together in one facility, with more floor space. I3C is busting at the seams.

As with any successful business, I3Concepts has its own niche for work and customer service.

Secure parking facilities comes to mind first for Comeaux. The company has aligned itself with TIBA Parking Systems in Ohio. They serve numerous verticals, including airports, medical facilities, hotels and central management, among other verticals.

“TIBA breaks the mold with innovative parking solutions and emerging technologies. With more than 30 years of experience, TIBA caters to customers from such diverse industries as airports, universities, shopping centers, municipalities, medical centers and high se-

curity facilities,” Comeaux said. “Built with exceptional and intuitive design, TIBA allows us to focus on efficiency and profitability, helping us help our clients maximize ROI in less time.”

As Comeaux launched into the security industry, he found his sweet spot in car parking. In fact, he started his new venture in 2008, just when the economy was on a downward spiral. Numerous friends and associates warned him not to start his new business, but he had a concept in mind, and felt like with the economy going south, security would be heading skyward.

Comeaux opened his doors for business, and there he was, on his own and looking for install work. It worked and within a couple years he was hiring employees as the business grew. His business philosophy is what really helped him take off.

“Surround yourself with people that are as good as, or better than myself, and we started growing,” Comeaux said. “It is these people that really built the business.”

As the business grew, Comeaux envisioned the company employing eight to 10 people, and doing \$1 million of business in a year. That goal has been surpassed as he is on target to have a \$6 to \$8 million year this year, and projecting an \$8 to \$10 million in the near future. So, the business that expected to be small enough to earn a living



has cascaded into nearly 40 employees, and a multi-million dollar resource. Located in North Dallas, the company has opened satellite offices in Austin, San Antonio, and is planning to open an office in Houston by June. Oklahoma is on track to have a branch location in 2018, where they already have parking systems in place.

It didn't hurt that he's surrounded himself with top-name products, such as Salient (VMS provider), Automatic-Systems (pedestrian and vehicle entrance control systems, and IP camera manufacturers, as well as many other manufacturers in the security industry.

- **Salient.** For his installations, Comeaux said this is the top of the line VMS, and has been integrating this system for the past seven years. "A core value at Salient is 'service first,'" said Paul Smith, district sales manager for Salient. "Partners like I3Concepts which share that value and bring technical expertise to the design and installation of security systems consistently deliver the best deployment experience for our users."
- **DSX.** The day I3Concepts got started, they began a partnership with DSX. Comeau said they are the 17th most productive dealer nationwide with DSX, and worldwide of more than 50 dealers.
- **Automatic-Systems.** I3Concepts is the largest dealer for Automatic Systems ParkPlus intelligent parking gates in the United States, and is also a major integrator of AS's optical turnstiles, portals and vehicle gates in Texas. "Jeff has made employee technical training and customer service

a priority, we could see the commitment from the first day. As our very first and most trained ParkPlus dealer in the United States," said Mike McGovern of Automatic Systems. "I3 set the standard for other parking system integrators in our system. As for security optical turnstiles and other pedestrian portals, Jeff's team has set themselves apart by personalizing the customer experience. We wish that we could have another 50 dealers like I3 Concepts."

- **Maxxess Systems.** I3C has been working with the product since the late 1908s, back when it was Intelligent Controls Inc.

I3 has been installing parking system for the last four years, but today it has become nearly 50 percent of the company's gross sales. Parking has been a fast moving and steady part of the growth. As mentioned, being a dealer for TIBA has provided I3C with a wide territory for sales and integration. For instance, I3Concepts is responsible for parking security systems in North Dallas at the Galleria shopping center, and is installing a license plate recognition system at the Gaylord Texan Resort Hotel and Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. Both solutions are TIBA and LPR.

"Getting work has come because we believe in customer relationships, referrals and quality workmanship," Comeaux said. "You simply can't do enough for a customer to keep that relationship working. We believe the service call in the most important part of the business. If a customer has a broken gate arm, we respond and get it fixed right away."

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Understanding the security aspect of the parking vertical depends upon the type of technology installed. A license plate reader will scan the license plate and if it is in the system, the gate arm automatically raises. If it is not recognized, the driver will have to take and ticket and pay upon leaving the parking structure. Parking payment also has its own routine. All card issue devices and payment terminals are brought into the Dallas office, and checked to make sure they work properly and efficiently.

I3C mainly operates in the Dallas/Fort Worth area but is expanding and is scheduled to make a move to a much larger facility this month. The benefits of being a Texas company allow for training for clients and end users, and offers excellent tech support for the customer. Those customers are mainly high-rise, multi-tenant buildings, as well as low-rise buildings and executive office buildings and parking garage structures.

Service staff who can keep up with the changing and evolving tech-

nology is likely the one thing that keeps Comeaux awake at night. The future is systems that are IP based, Comeaux said. In fact, he is certain that today's security technicians must have more education about IP/IT networking experience and infrastructure systems that will integrate together. He also said that the systems used yesterday would require two, three or four cameras per room, where today it can be accomplished with one camera. It also requires less sophistication for installation, but the technician must understand programming.

Well-qualified employees are so important to I3C, that the company will pay for all training classes that technicians need to stay current with trending requirements. Comeaux said technicians need to know plenty about a lot of different security installations. In fact, I3C does not do any new analog installations but will encourage customers to upgrade and move to digital technology. If a customer has analog, they will use encoders to upgrade the client's system but still encourages the move to digital.

For aspiring technicians, Comeaux has some valuable advice: "Learn as much as you can with every educational opportunity in the security and IT business."

For anyone else in the security business, he said that service should always take a priority. "Value the customer's needs," he said. "We guarantee a 4-hour onsite visit, and a 2-hour response to a call. DS

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

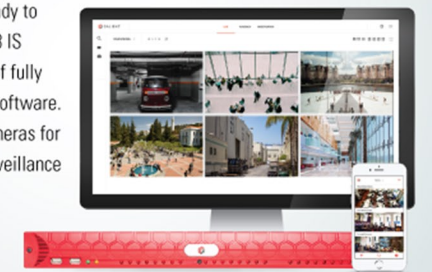
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