

One security platform to rule them all?

 By [Neil Cameron](#)

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Each type of facility is different so it needs a different security solution - this thinking is fast fading as the benefits of a comprehensive security platform that incorporate diverse functionality, open systems and best practices becomes clear.

Among larger companies, typically multi-facility organisations and multinationals, the shift is already in full force. Smaller companies with multiple facilities are now exploring this trend, however, as they become increasingly aware of the opportunity that these platforms present to improve the effectiveness of security solutions, centralise security management, cut effort and costs, and introduce best practices.

Because the needs of facilities differ so broadly - consider the security needs of a corporate site versus those of an industrial or manufacturing facility - companies have in the past acquired solutions to meet individual needs. Today, however, integrated security solutions that incorporate diverse functionality are able to cater for almost any kind of site, making them suitable for use across the organisation's property portfolio. The benefits are significant.

Comprehensive platforms may include CCTV, access control, perimeter alerts, fire alarms, advanced analytics, and environmental controls (HVAC and lighting). They are highly configurable to meet the specific needs of organisations and industry sectors, have interfaces built for ease of use, and reporting capabilities designed for ease of comprehension, fast decision-making and improved management.

Built on open systems, these full-feature security platforms are able to hook into enterprise systems (e.g., human resources databases), and the majority of recognised security vendors' solutions. They are also able to make use of existing hardware - e.g., CCTV cameras, access control readers and controllers - allowing organisations to sweat existing investments. However, it's the greater efficiencies and advanced functionality these platforms offer that makes them so attractive.

Some of the key benefits include the following:

- **Cost:** A single server and single set up of the system is required for use at multiple facilities;
- **Operations:** Experts are not needed at each facility to manage security systems as a centralised national security policy and features can be applied;
- **Multi-facility best practices:** Using a single platform has great advantages - with a single security policy and set of security processes rolled out nationwide, companies can ensure best practices are implemented and can continuously refine and improve their systems and policies;

- **Economies of scale:** Where previously a facility may not have been able to justify the implementation of a time and attendance system to control the real-time movement of staff, it becomes possible with the use of a single comprehensive security platform that integrates this functionality;
- **Workforce management:** By integrating the access control solution to an HR database the organisation can ensure that staff do not enter specific facilities without the necessary training or certification, or if they have exceeded shift time allowances. This will assist them to comply with health-and-safety requirements. The access control systems can also interface into payroll systems;
- **Better control:** The ability to centralise control room surveillance across numerous sites would cut capital costs and improve reaction times. All alerts could, for example, be routed to head office where a 24-hour control room could manage reactions. The use of advanced analytics further increases organisations' ability to identify and react to incidents effectively; and
- **Energy management and sustainability:** The imperative to control and manage energy consumption and organisations' focus on sustainable operations is also supported by full-feature security platforms, with comprehensive threshold alerting and advanced configuration (e.g., to switch off non-essential equipment or synchronise facility use and lighting and HVAC controls) enabling organisations to manage consumption better.

As the cost and complexity of security management continues to increase, and external demands (such as management of energy consumption and stricter health-and-safety regulations) make themselves felt, the benefits of integrated systems with advanced functionality, open systems and global best practices become apparent. They are certainly worth exploring.

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