



## Changing of the Guard



by Shelton  
Blackwell

**I**t's almost unbelievable the changes we have seen just in our lifetime. Technologies such as computers, Internet, GPS, and smart phones have not only had an impact on our lifestyle; they have also enhanced our security and safety.

No longer do we have George Orwell's terrifying vision of government video surveillance that he wrote about in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Video surveillance and access control systems have lost their big brother stigma. Instead, security measures such as CCTV and access control have become a way of life for us in the 21st century. More importantly, they are more effective in solving the security challenges we face.

### Yesterday's Security

For years, security has meant guards with the addition of electronic security such as cameras and monitors. But times have changed and so has technology. What's the difference? Yesterday's security meant waiting for something to happen and then responding. It was reactive instead of proactive. The problem with being reactive is that by the time one reacts, the damage is already done.

It might surprise you to hear that simply adding more guards is not, and has not been, the answer. Installing additional cameras that simply record an event or an alarm system that only triggers at an event will not help either. Security guards cannot monitor many video cameras,



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watch every single minute of video, and stay vigilant. A more proactive and preventive approach is the answer.

Today's interactive, cutting-edge technology integrates guard services with advanced security solutions such as video analytics, high-definition video, biometrics, secure Internet connections, and remote monitoring, far surpassing the limitations of yesterday's passive electronic security systems. It is literally a changing of the guard.

Interactive technology complements traditional guards. This can significantly increase security levels and considerably lower costs. It might, at first, seem like there is a lack of security. But, don't be fooled. There is actually greater security in place as security guards are being replaced with interactive technology and remote monitoring.



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**Virtual Guards and  
Remote Monitoring**

For example, a virtual guard service can remotely monitor certain areas of a community or at certain times of the day. From the monitoring center, remote guards can open and close gates for residents and pre-registered visitors. For unregistered visitors, the monitoring center can communicate with residents for authorization.

Because a camera system can be connected to the monitoring center and to the Internet, in addition to professional operators, authorized members of a community or business will be able to view the cameras and video archive at any time through any Web-enabled device such as a computer, tablet, or smart phone. All information and access is secure and password protected. Instant alerts, e-mails, text messages, and/or video jpegs can be sent to any contact list or responding authority—they'll know what's happening. It's remarkable how far we have come and how connected we can be.

**Video Analytics**

Cameras with video analytics software have the intelligence to analyze video content on the spot and decide whether an event merits attention or not. The analytics picks up on incidents and alerts the control center. The sound system allows the operator to warn anyone trespassing to leave immediately. If needed, a guard on premises can be sent to the area or the police can be notified.

Relying on video analytics to automatically monitor

cameras and alert for events is, in many cases, much more effective than relying on a human operator. Research studies, as well as real-life incidents, have shown that the average person watching CCTV monitors of a video surveillance system cannot remain alert and attentive for more than 20 minutes.

With a proactive solution, the video analytics software does the watching, detecting, defining, and notifying in real time to a 24/7 monitoring center. Nothing will be missed and all videos can be recorded in high-definition quality, and select people will be able to log into the system to view video footage live and retrieve video events.

Video analytics software can detect objects, such as people, while ignoring unrelated objects. It then tracks these objects reliably, taking into account perspective, size, speed, direction of travel of the target, and the distance it has moved and generates an alarm when specific conditions are met.

**Why Not Motion Detection?**

You might ask if you need video analytics if you have a motion detection system. That’s a good question. Motion detection is a simple form of video analytics, but ordinary motion detection systems are limited and not perfect. For example, false alarm conditions are often produced if the lighting or weather conditions suddenly change, or even an animal passed through the field of view. Video analytics offers a much more intelligent approach than motion detection.

**Recorded Video**

In the event that questionable activity, unauthorized entry, damage to gates or property occurs, video and audio can be recalled, replayed, analyzed, and submitted to law enforcement or insurance representatives as needed. Because it is digital, you can easily search by date, time, and event. Through digital recording and archiving of video events—rapidly search terabytes of stored video at the click of a button. With analog, you have to search for hours to find what you are looking for. Think of the difference between a VCR tape and a DVD.

Another important advantage is the ready availability of evidential, high-quality video and audio footage. In the unfortunate situation, where



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security has been breached, this evidence becomes vital in nailing down perpetrators and collecting information.

With digital recorded video, you have the option of storing your video in secure, off-site, servers. Plus, recorded video can be accessed from anywhere using any web-enabled device such as a PC, smart phone, or tablet. So, no matter where you are, you can see the video.

### **Biometrics**

Another technology available today is biometrics. We use a key to get into the house, a password to log on to the computer, and a card to get into the community. We've all experienced the panic that comes with misplaced keys, forgotten passwords, and lost cards. It isn't just that you can't get what you need—if you lose your keys or jot your password on a piece of paper, someone else can find them and use them as though they were you. That's where biometrics comes in. Instead of using something you have—for example, a key or card—or something you know—such as a password—biometrics uses who you are to identify you.

Biometrics can use physical characteristics, such as your face, fingerprints, irises, or veins, or behavioral characteristics, such as your voice or handwriting. Unlike keys and passwords, your personal traits are extremely difficult to lose or forget. They can also be very difficult to copy. Biometrics is used as a form of identification and access control.

Authentication by biometric verification is becoming increasingly common in corporate and public security systems, consumer electronics,

and point of sale (POS) applications. In addition to security, the driving force behind biometric verification has been convenience.

With today's interactive security, communities and businesses have a perfect combination of guards with technology, which provides a proactive solution to security as well as an enhanced lifestyle. This is the wave of the future, and you will be seeing more and more of this type of interactive security in the near future. We are definitely seeing a changing of the guard.

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