



EMBRACING CHANGE

The importance of Access Control for Security

Through its thirty-plus-year history, the access control industry has quietly plodded along, out of the spotlight of change and transformation, doing what it has always been asked to: keep bad people out and lock and unlock. Overall, it has delivered on that task. To many in the industry, that is just how we have wanted it. But over the past three years, that has all changed. And it has changed in a big way. Before getting into those changes, let us define what we are talking about and discuss how we got here.

What is access control? Simply put, access control allows the right people to enter a space while, at the

same time, keeping the wrong ones out. As an industry that is traditionally slow to adopt macro trends, it is starting to lean into digitalisation, transforming its solutions to keep up with modern-day needs. Security is fundamental to ensuring feelings of comfort and safety in occupants at work and home – so why not invest in the newest technology? This piece will explore the development of the industry and consider the importance of embracing change.

Let's go back to the beginning. While the key (pun intended) aspects are based on the same guiding principle – keeping the bad individuals out – access control has evolved to become more of a future-focused concept. In the Seventies, the industry was based solely

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on this former, more straightforward principle. An access control system could prove its worth by keeping occupants of the building from coming to external harm.

Naturally, this requirement is still needed today, but the systems implemented at the time failed to reflect other contemporary requirements – hence, the industry needs to evolve. This evolution is reflected in the industry currently adopting cloud and mobile computing, using APIs and a software-centric approach to business models and technical aptitude. With modern solutions involved, today's access control solutions deliver safety and security, conveniences, operational efficiency and even revenue generation. These concepts should exist together to create the best possible outcomes for professional and personal use.

While the industry's evolution has taken decades, historical events tend to speed up such occurrences; change is only possible with external factors. This is true of access control, as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted important considerations that had yet to be given weight in the past. To control the spread of infection, those in charge of corporate spaces were forced to introduce seamless, contactless security systems and emphasise occupant health by keeping unwanted visitors out of the space. As a result, the industry was forced to step up with a different story and solution set to meet expectations and demand.

But what did this rushed evolution look like? From 2020 onwards, serious discussions on mobile and cloud architectures, electronic visitor management systems and even biometrics in access control increased, reflecting changing global safety requirements as individuals returned to the workspace. In its Physical Access Control System report, Fact.MR emphasised that the increased demand for biometrics was a large part of the Physical Access Control System industry's 13 percent growth in 2021. In practice, individuals have likely seen such change in their daily lives without picking up on its significance.

THE MORE SECURE AN INDIVIDUAL FEELS IN THE SPACE, THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO BE HAPPY

With research portals now predicting an ever-increasing investment in space over the next decade, we must consider how it will affect individuals professionally. First up – corporate leaders and commercial landlords, who should be in no doubt that security investment is for the long term. By embracing the newest security solutions, these parties can prove dedication to the well-being of their employees and occupants (respectively). It may sound like common sense that the more secure an individual feels in the space, the more likely they are to be happy – however, such factors can go amiss when prioritising more overt workplace benefits. Therefore, business leaders who take it upon themselves to recognise the link, and embrace modern access control systems, will improve the mood of their workers and benefit from increased talent recruitment and retention.

Moreover, the pandemic's impact on the security industry was far from isolated. Not only did those looking into security have to keep health benefits at the front of their minds, but they also had to consider how people did their jobs – remote and hybrid working becoming the norm. Forbes has recently commented on the bosses attempting to reverse this culture shift, failing to recognise their impact on their employees who would instead work from home. With so many people afraid of losing their jobs in 2023's global economic climate, it is pivotal to business success that leaders find ways to make their employees feel supported, encouraging enthusiasm and attendance. Security is one of the best, underrated ways to demonstrate such a commitment to employees and reap the rewards. In summary, access control systems are fundamental to beating corporate competition as the world recovers from a global pandemic, demonstrating your dedication to your employees practically.

For workplaces that hold in-person meetings, the pandemic also brought to light another issue – handling visitor management. We went from visitor management systems only doing precisely that, managing visitors, to everyone being a visitor. With the change in how we manage the facilities and how we handle the people coming and going, a need for data and processes arose, reflected across leisure facilities,

workplaces, and healthcare buildings. The right access control solution has become the one that collects and analyses such data, including digital visualisation, to ensure that only authorised visitors are allowed to enter.

With stakeholders, occupants and visitors to consider, how do you know you're choosing the right solution? Ask yourself the following question: does my chosen solution prioritise the user? Ultimately, if your access control system fails in its user-friendly credentials, it will fail to bring the value you expect from your investment. On the other hand, if you choose a solution that is easy to use, occupants will see clear benefits from its functionality.

COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTED IMPORTANT AREAS THAT HAD YET TO BE GIVEN WEIGHT IN THE PAST

While there are plenty of benefits from embracing access control systems in the workplace, how would it help to include them in the home? As previously mentioned, security and feeling safe are fundamental to happiness and paramount in the place where people spend the most time. In a world where stress is expected and caused by numerous external factors, individuals are likely to do all they can to minimise the stress levels in their homes. Therefore, access control becomes essential, not only for the workplace but for everyday life. We can combat future mental and physical health issues with improved mood and reduced stress about security. But where to start?

As access control becomes an increasingly hot topic, household names like Amazon and Google are making it easier than ever to find your home's most up-to-date security systems. Earlier this year, Google Nest, in its partnership with ADT, unveiled its newest invention, the 'ADT Self Setup' security

system. Not only does it attempt to make improving your home security more accessible by letting you set it up yourself, but it also uses the latest technology to connect all elements, including the camera on the Nest, to a 'Smart Home Hub command centre'. This reflects the importance of user-centricity, which is fundamental to a successful access control solution. Of course, such big tech players' involvement in the space doesn't render smaller companies obsolete. However, it demonstrates the increasing competition in the industry, reflecting growth in importance.

Another critical piece of useful access control technology for the home is the smart lock. Since its inception, the industry for home security products has seen a move from hardware to software. In the past, this move has failed to garner the expected enthusiasm – partly due to adaptation issues. The corporations offering additions to the locks already on doors have shown significant momentum – in no small part due to their user-friendly nature. However, their importance for residential homes should not be bypassed. Smart locks enable the collaboration of technology and security at a lesser price. This is especially true as more corporations come out with smart locks, battling to sell the most affordable and best.

Post-pandemic, office safety will be emphasised, with user-friendly models beating the competition. At home, corporations that make adaptation easy for customers will be the ones to succeed. With Big Tech poking into the discussion and increased investment in the space, access control is building significant momentum – for example, M&G Investment Management Ltd has just acquired over 99,000 shares in Napco Security Technologies. With such growth unlikely to slow down anytime soon, the industry is integral to the future of security, both at home and at work.

If this article has left you confident about the world of access control (good!) but unsure where to find the best solution fit for you, now is the time to sign up for the Access Control Executive Brief – the industry's only objective analysis of going-on. ●

Today's access control solutions deliver safety and security, conveniences, operational efficiency and sometimes even revenue generation



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