# Don't Get Left Behind

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5 signs your security technology is stuck in the past

You've relied on your alarm system for years, and it works just fine. That's what many users think until they spend a few minutes checking to see whether the system is costing them more money than necessary. In the process, they discover advances in security technology that help raise profits and save time.

Take a little time to evaluate your facility's security. If your current security platform meets at least three of these signs, it's time to have a conversation with an expert.

1.Your alarm system relies on a traditional phone line. For decades, alarm companies have used traditional telephone landlines, also known as POTS (plain old telephone service) lines, to communicate alarm signals. Although historically reliable in communicating intrusion signals, telephone landlines can be costly and stand in the way of a business getting the most from today's security technology. Telephone landlines can be easily cut by vandals, rendering the alarm system inoperable.

Restaurant owners and facility managers who have opted out of telephone landlines know that substantial savings can be achieved. What are some of the options? One popular alternative is a cellular radio-based security system, which uses digital cellular communication to wirelessly transmit alarm signals. Since the connection relies on cellular towers and is a wireless, digital transmission, it is considered more reliable than a POTS line. Another option is internet-based communication, whereby alarm signals are transmitted via a broadband connection, such as cable, DSL, fiber optics, wireless or satellite. Though internet-based alarm monitoring results in faster communication signals and is less expensive than a cellular line, many skeptics questionare reliability, especially during power outages.

2.Your alarm system uses analog cameras, not IP cameras. It's no surprise that video surveillance owns a growing share of the security market, especially considering safety concerns, worries about sensitive areas of a facility and the increasing need to monitor everything from pricey inventory to the employees who handle it. What's surprising, however, is the number of existing security systems that still use analog cameras.

Affordable internet protocol (IP) cameras deliver high-definition color, stunning picture quality and a wider field of view. They can also interface with other security devices, such as motion detectors—a smart feature that may not be available with an analog camera system. If motion is detected in a monitored area, the IP camera will automatically begin to record. The system can also pinpoint exactly when events occur, eliminating hours of sifting through video footage.

IP also enables better storage options and analytics. For example, video surveillance as a service (VSaaS) is storage in the cloud, which eliminates storage hard drive or local device failures. IP cameras also open the door to interactive services. For example, some IP-based systems are accessible from a mobile app. You can use a smartphone, tablet or PC to remotely see what's happening at your restaurant or retail store in real time, and practically anywhere there's an internet connection. Let go of those analog cameras and opt for IP.

3.Your alarm system can't be controlled from a mobile app. Most of us own a smartphone and use it to check emails, read the news, search the internet, watch videos and conduct business. Why not use it to oversee the alarm system that is monitoring your staff, property and assets? Instead of physically checking on locations, they can be quickly accessed from wherever there is an internet connection. You also have access to data such as the status of various security devices within your system, alar m statuses, pending service requests and even system history. Having the convenience of a security mobile app is helpful, especially for those who manage multiple locations.

4.Your alarm system doesn't provide real-time intelligence. Intrusion and theft monitoring are basic alarm system deliverables, but access to meaningful data can make a significant difference between profit and loss, especially when it comes to the security of multiple assets. Reports on late openings, early closings, off-schedule access at specific locations, alarm histories, police dispatches and other data provide insight that helps you make better decisions about your daily operations and personnel. Advanced security technology allows you to take this data one step further by letting you act on it immediately.

For example, let's say a manager at one of your restaurants is involved in an altercation with a fellow employee. A few moments later, the manager—who has access to the office, the register and the alarm system— quits. With old alarm system technology, you would remove this manager's credentials and security access by calling or emailing your provider. This change could take days, possibly weeks. New system technologies offer self-service desktop and mobile applications that allow you to instantly delete, add or modify an employee's alarm code. The change occurs within minutes and can be done anytime, anywhere using an internet-connected smartphone, tablet or PC.

This technological application is perhaps one of the most relevant and impactful to date within the commercial security systems landscape. It puts owners and facility managers in the highest level of control over all locations from anywhere in the world that has an internet connection.

5.Your alarm system lacks an immediate notification system. Restaurant facility managers and loss-prevention specialists are expected to act quickly when there's a disruption or possible threat to the business. Getting a call in the middle of the night from your alarm monitoring center may not be fun, but it shows they are on top of things.

If your monitoring center does not offer rapid dispatch protocols based on your established instructions, think twice as to whether you are getting the most for your money. Among the most stringent technology requirements for monitoring centers are those associated with certification from Underwriters Laboratories (UL) and Five Diamond accreditation from the Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA). Your alarm monitoring center does not necessarily have to meet these standards, but if it does, you can be assured that its personnel and infrastructure are bound to high standards.

Today's technology also allows you to receive SMS (text) messaging and email alerts in addition to phone calls regarding alarm signals. When assessing your security system, make sure it offers these features.

Jeff Szajnecki has been in the security industry for 11 years and joined RFMA in 2016. He is Vice President of Commercial and National Account Sales at Guardian Protection, a leading national account provider to a number of restaurant chains.