

Technology Spotlight - NetBotz

With NetBotz technology, detecting threats before they occur is definitely possible.

Two of the founding pillars of the security industry are to detect and annunciate threats when they occur. As technology has evolved, more and more products today are now able to detect both security and environmental threats prior to them actually happening.

One company that offers such technology is NetBotz. Based in Austin, Tex., and founded in 1999, NetBotz is a provider of IP-based physical security solutions that protect customers from physical threats caused by intrusion, malfeasance, error and hostile environmental factors, extreme temperatures and the presence of dangerous gases, high humidity and water leaks.

NetBotz products monitor remote distributed sites where an organization houses critical assets and spaces and alerts personnel at the earliest sign of trouble, hopefully affording them the time they need to pre-empt problems before damage and downtime occur.

Although its roots are in protecting IT assets in data centres, NetBotz, over the past few years, has jumped into the physical security arena. Today, its solutions are protecting more than 2,000 commercial, government and academic customers worldwide.

"We took that [IT] notion and expanded it into something much, much broader — into something that is really a holistic security platform," says Tom Goldman, president of NetBotz. "[Our]

architecture allows for the integration of best-of-breed technologies from a sensor perspective. Clients [now] have options other than analogue CCTV solutions and can actually have all of that functionality and more, while having it on the IT network where it can be protected.

"If we were to talk a year ago, I would have said 99 percent of our business is protecting IT assets," he adds. "Today, it is more like 80 percent IT and 20 percent pure security; and by the end of the next year it, will be more like 50-50."

Currently, NetBotz products are distributed in Canada through Anixter International, and according to Bob Moore, NetBotz's country manager for Canada, the company intends to open up its distribution channel over the next year. (NetBotz also has manufacturer representatives in Ottawa and Toronto, Ont., and Vancouver, B.C.)

All of NetBotz's environment-monitoring appliances, including its WallBotz product line, are self-contained and Web-accessible, and include the following features:

- integrated temperature, humidity and air flow sensors to monitor the environment;
- an integrated audio sensor that notifies users of audio alerts (such as smoke alarms, intrusion detection devices);
- a door switch sensor that notifies users when the room or server cabinet is accessed;

- external sensor ports that support sensors for amperage and external temperature, and third-party dry contact sensors for water, glass-break, UPS alert ports and more;
- alerts that are sent using e-mail and SNMP traps when any monitored environmental condition goes outside of a user-specified range;
- alerts and sensor data that can be posted to Web servers using built-in HTTP post support, and can be forwarded to other systems using FTP posting; and



- a built-in camera that enables users to view the condition of equipment via a Web interface, and also automatically captures images of the room whenever a door to the room is opened, or optionally when motion is detected.

In terms of installation, NetBotz devices come pre-configured with normal monitoring thresholds. For example, one of its default settings ensures that if the temperature in a room is greater than 85°F or colder than 60°F, an alarm is sent to the end user, who ultimately decides how to be alerted (i.e., FTP, e-mail, phone



call) when thresholds are breached. For Goldman, these self-discovery features allow security integrators, who may not be up to speed on the latest network issues, to easily install the product.

As previously mentioned, NetBotz products began with the IT world in mind, but as Goldman states, the technology evolved into the security field due to society becoming a lot more security conscious. And because its products can be integrated with a wide-range of products, specifically from a surveillance perspective, customers that utilize NetBotz's monitoring appliances with their analogue CCTV systems now can add software algorithms, such as motion detection and trending.

"One of the things missing on the security side is that many of these solutions are not particularly open from an architecture perspective," says Goldman. "For the most part, they don't exist on an IT-based network, they exist on a stand-alone network, so the ability to be able to take advantage of that infrastructure that's already in place at the client's location makes it very affordable to the [customer]." ☺