

Meet the installer

Security life with Iain Stringer of Synectics Security in Nottingham

What would be a typical project for you?

We work in a broad range of sectors, including transport, critical infrastructure, high security, banking and public space. As such, it is hard to pin our colours to one ‘typical’ project. Especially as we offer everything from surveillance camera installation on a moving vehicle to integrating complex systems incorporating technologies and solutions such as access control, ANPR, perimeter protection/detection, video analytics etc. What they all tend to have in common, however, is that they are highly regulated environments that present very specific security, safety or operational challenges that require more than a ‘plug and play’ responses. Projects that call on our experience and sector know-how, just as much as our technical engineering skills and technology offering.

Do you have any ‘go to’ technology?

It’s entirely dependent on the project in question and on specific customer needs. We work with best of breed technology partners so that we have access to the right solution to meet each customer’s individual needs. For example, on access control it may be that on one project we work with CEM Systems, on another with CCure or Grosvenor. Same with analytics - we have a close relationship with the likes of BriefCam and IPS so we can flex according to need. With video management systems the same...that fact with work with providers including Milestone, Synectics, Flir means we can find the best solution for the customer which meets their objectives, rather than having to shoehorn in a specific type of technology that isn’t the best fit for the job. This flexibility naturally extends to our on-vehicle solutions too – with providers such as Timespace and Stoneridge-Orlaco in our partner stable. Every technology from every company has its strengths and specialities – it’s our job to factor that into the solutions we design and eventually install.

What is the best thing about working in security?

This might sound a bit righteous...I really don’t mean it to. But I honestly think one of the best things is knowing that you have a role to play in keeping people safe. Maybe even in saving lives. If I ever get asked what I do, people aren’t always very keen to hear about the latest technologies (even though I find them fascinating!). They are, without fail, always interested to hear about what the solutions we deploy enable. What they can



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Time in security/fire: Almost 9 years
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Areas of expertise: Integrated security solutions for complex, critical, and highly regulated environments, from on-vehicle systems to large-scale infrastructure projects
Accreditations: NSI Gold, RISQS, Cyber Essentials Plus, and the latest ISO Quality, Health & Safety, Environmental Management, and Information Security certifications

detect. Prevent. Promote. The good they can do. The other great thing about working in our industry, for me anyway, is that you are able to build really meaningful relationships...with both customers and technology partners...through collaboration. Working together to solve a particular puzzle. It’s hugely rewarding.

Is third party accreditation beneficial?

Absolutely. In this industry there are some projects you just can’t even entertain without the right accreditations. As well as being a registered nuclear and defence contractor, we hold a number of prestigious certifications, from NSI Gold and RISQS to Cyber Essentials Pus. This is no ‘tick box’ exercise. Making sure we constantly review and update our working practices to meet the very latest standards keeps us competitive and moving forwards as a business. It makes us a better business. ➔

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Iain (centre) with Mark Pennington, Commercial Director, and Mike Brocklesby, Finance Director





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Do you think there is a skills shortage in the industry?

I do think there is a skills shortage, yes. It’s incredibly difficult to find quality field engineers. Which makes it so important to invest in training in order to retain and upskill our workforce. That’s our approach anyway. From our graduate and apprenticeship positions through to our longest serving technicians (and trust me, some have served a long time...collectively our engineers have almost 400 years’ experience!), we are always looking to make learning opportunities available...whether through internal mentoring or external qualifications.

Are there any common requests from customers that give you problems?

Our business has been built on delivering solutions for challenging settings so it’s kind of par for the course that requests are difficult. It’s what we thrive on! What can be trickier is when what a customer wants doesn’t necessarily match what they truly need. For example, it may be they have seen another project where a specific type of technology has been deployed and want to replicate it, when in fact there may be a number of operational or risk factors which mean it doesn’t quite fit. Something else fits better. I think this type of situation puts the spotlight on how important the consultation side of what we do is. Because we work with a select range of diverse partners, we aren’t biased towards ‘one way of doing things’ and that means we can advise on the most appropriate way forward in each instance.

What is the industry’s biggest myth?

At the moment I think there are a lot of misconceptions around cloud-based solutions, especially in terms of cyber security. Many still believe that connectivity enabled via the cloud is inherently more risky in terms of data breaches. It isn’t. At least, not with the right set-up. Which is true of any security integration. I think it’s our responsibility as security integrators and installers to make sure we are skilled in this area and offer solutions certified to the very latest standards.

What impact has smart/home automation had on your business?

We don’t serve the domestic market, so this hasn’t really impacted our business directly. Indirectly, I think it is fair to say that the level of connectivity and automation people are now familiar with in their own homes has raised the bar on what they expect of the world around them. The public spaces they visit, the journeys

they take, the services they receive. We see this translating into the requests we receive. Requests we are of course happy to answer.

What would make your job easier?

Having the right team in place always makes my job easier and I truly believe we have that. In merging Synectics Mobile Systems and Quadrant Security Group to establish Synectics Security, we’ve really assembled a great team that is ideally equipped to handle anything, from buses to banking data centres, rail to retail. It makes a huge difference knowing that you have such a portfolio of skills to offer.

What is your ultimate/fantasy electronic security/fire product?

My fantasy would be for more manufacturers to think beyond the security silo with the products they develop, right from the off. Don’t get me wrong, many do this already. But I think there is so much more potential. The level of integration and connectivity now available to organisations means security objectives are merging more and more with operational needs – a product can be made to fit into that reality but products designed from the ground-up with that reality in mind from the outset really stand out from the crowd.

What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?

I studied law at university and while it may not seem very relevant to the work I do today, I do call on a lot of the principles and skills I developed. More importantly though, it was something that really interested me. And for me, following your passions is never a waste of time, even if life takes you a different way. What is a waste of time is passing up the chance to do what truly excites you. I love what I do today because of sticking to that idea, so I guess that is the advice I’d have to pass on to my younger self.

Will England ever win the football World Cup again?

No, sadly not.

If you won £25,000 what would you do with the money?

That depends on whether my wife found out about it first, I may not get the chance to do anything! I’m just kidding (especially if she is reading this). I know exactly where it would go, to local charities and support groups. I know that sounds very clichéd, but I think what recent times have shown us how much ‘community’ matters, and how many great organisations can be operating on your doorstep that could all do with a helping hand.