

I have worked with Tavcom since the very early days and even though I have now been retired for some three years they continue to keep me actively involved and informed.

Of course things have changed enormously over the years, both in terms of their course content and training regimes. Originally electronic security systems were only formed from three distinct and separate disciplines. These were intruder, access control and CCTV. Although Mike personally liked CCTV he wanted to provide much wider industry training in order to cover all of the developing technologies. With that in mind I worked with Mike in developing the first generation of learner manuals. At the time the use of CCTV was rather specialist and desperately needed some good industry training programmes. CCTV was a self-contained system only, being closed circuit, and didn't go beyond those confines. But specifying CCTV was complicated because limited information was available. At that stage there was also little in the way of remote communications. However, the training would have to account for how surveillance would most likely evolve and integrate with other systems.

Because I was working actively in the field with intruder and access control as an Assessor and also as a contributor for a number of security magazines I entered the Tavcom frame. My role was to develop the manuals that would define and govern the training. We would also produce the question banks for the different qualifications. The training was carried out at a training room in the Uplands hotel grounds and I would sit-in on the courses that Mike had developed. Together we would then produce the manuals to align exactly with the content of the courses given by the tutors.

It was important that the course material reflected the training syllabus and schedule. The classroom courses were very much geared towards installers who did not need an instruction to turn off their mobile phones. Mobiles didn't exist! This was all happening when the early forms of mobile communication using specific telepoint telephone services were being phased out. The most prominent type was the Rabbit network that offered paging and messaging systems. It enabled subscribers to carry specific home telephone handsets and make outgoing calls from them if they were within 100 metres of a Rabbit transmitter. Signs showed the location of these transmitter base stations. In fact one sign still exists in the town centre where I live. Of course we could not survive at present in business or socially if we did not have the most modern mobile communications with built in cameras and internet connectivity. This is certainly the case with electronic security as most industry standard products now allow downloading, uploading and remote maintenance and system re-set via mobile apps. For sure the first years of technical security training were rather different to what we find now, but the point is, at the time, they were ideal.

The actual security equipment and components for installation in those early days offered little in the way of IT, remote communications or internet features. Although the training has changed over the prevailing years to reflect current trends and building management systems, the links that could be made between different products some twenty or twenty five years ago, was restricted. Auto diallers that automatically dialled 999 and provided a pre-recorded voice message direct to the

police were being withdrawn. Alarm receiving centres with mobile security guard services were just starting to appear to take on the role of monitoring. This was to remove the burden placed on the police because the security system industry in general was expanding at a rapid rate. The police also refused to allow installers to connect anything automatic in order to dial 999. As it happens the auto dialler was the forerunner of the now popular low security voice dialler that can be used with any security system to notify of an activity. Of course these modern voice diallers can not be used to dial 999 but are mainly intended for Neighbourhood Watch or similar schemes.

Access control in general was also expanding at the time because of a greater use of security in the industrial and commercial sectors. But also a move in many areas to gated communities with apartments and communal living meant a greater level of controlled access was needed. This meant they had to include fire protection and alarms and structured cabling. Intruder technologies extended to include perimeter detection techniques to work as external barriers. The Inspectorate bodies also became more progressive to satisfy the needs of the insurance industry.

As the years went on the courses developed to reflect changes in the industry and the need for new material and learner programmes. Although we accept that the very early technical security training subjects could only be classroom based for installers, the new generation courses now offer project management and designer qualification programmes. In the old days, bitesize, online, IP networking, fibre optics, PAT testing and cyber security were not words we had even heard of or they simply hadn't been invented. With this school of thought we should also mention electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems. These monitor tagged or labelled goods and stop them being taken through a surveillance area which is generated between pedestal or gate readers. They are widely adopted in shops and supermarkets. It is a rapidly developing technology. I will later mention it more.

Of course Tavcom have long retained their core subjects but offered others as required to provide a truly wide training portfolio. One thing comes to mind. I can always remember some twenty or so years ago talking to Mike about how emergency lighting, despite being widely installed because of the regulations, was in practice rarely used for its essential duty of escape lighting. There had to be a better case for it to be used in a dual role as amenity lighting. Not long after this conversation Tavcom happened to be providing a number of courses in York for Sony engineers. Mike gave me a call to ask if I could come along and simply talk for half an hour on emergency lighting. He liked the idea of explaining the greater benefits of emergency lighting to the delegates so he could consider the introduction of a related course. I attended and gave a short talk. From that point on, Tavcom have always offered and retained emergency lighting as a fringe subject. The logic has always been to stay alert to market trends and the need for electro technical training and associated qualifications and accreditation and then to respond accordingly.

Let us now visualise an electro technical training example to illustrate progress in system integration and communications. Consider an EAS system intended to stop someone stealing tagged goods even if hidden in a shopping bag. The tag would be detected and a local audible and visual alarm generated so that a security shop guard could attend. The person trying to take the goods could be retained in an area using an

access control barrier or door. In addition, all of the events could be monitored, watched by an operator, recorded and stored as video images at a remote point. This monitoring could be anywhere in the world and the recorded footage used as evidence. Therefore we would have electro technical training in place for truly integrated technical security products that included communication and sharing of information.

So we can conclude that the early days were essentially formed from stand alone and separate intruder, access control and CCTV core subjects. However the modern training trends illustrate the progress to diverse collective and integrated sharing of information and resources. Yet they still use the core subjects.

I can safely say it has been an honour to work alongside Tavcom. It is reassuring to see how effectively the training has developed over such a long period of time and to observe the wide forms of learning it has offered over the years. Yes it is now very futuristic but for sure it has managed to retain its core content and ethics.

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