

# The Convergent BlackBerry

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With seemingly no end of possibilities, the convergence of electronic security systems with digital information technology continues to dominate many aspects of the security industry at all levels. The interfacing of access control systems with payroll and other databases, cameras with IP protocols, and alarms with building management controls are but a few examples of the successful convergence of different technologies.

Another is the continuing convergence of speech, text and image transmission taking place in the field of mobile communication. From the humble beginnings of the brick cellphone, capable of speech transmission only, mobile technology such as that used by the latest smartphones has rapidly progressed to a convergent device that as well as voice transmission, also provides wireless text messaging, and full internet connection for e-mail, internet faxing and web browsing.

A prime example of such a 'smartphone' is the BlackBerry, first introduced as a two-way pager in 1999 by the Canadian company, Research In Motion (RIM). Later models of this wireless, handheld device also include a camera, GPS, and PDA applications such as an address book, calendar, and to-do lists. Some models also have signature capture capability and can read barcodes, extending their functionality to areas such as electronic stocktaking.

BlackBerry handhelds are integrated into an organisation's email system by means of a software package called the 'BlackBerry Enterprise Server' (BES). The software facilitates the transfer of messages through RIM's Network Operations Centre to and from the individual's BlackBerry by way of the user's wireless provider such as Vodafone or Telecom's Gen-i. As of September 2008, RIM estimates that it has some 19 million subscribers.

But the exciting news for the security industry is

that third party developers, such as Fusion5, can write application software for the BlackBerry to suit a user's particular requirements. This can result in huge savings by improving both verbal and written communication between the office or control room and staff in the field.

In May 2008, Fusion5 acquired Envisage Systems Limited, a company specialising in the provision of call centre, helpdesk and complaint management software. The provision of these services now complements Fusion5's BlackBerry applications facilitating order taking and processing, status notification and work-carried-out processes.

Other applications available to the BlackBerry platform include the listing of chargeables, time reporting, client status reviews, analysis of unresolved issues, and integration with Enterprise Resource Planning systems.

All this enables field staff such as security officers, alarm responders and service technicians using the BlackBerry to better communicate with their bases and respond to emergency calls and provide detailed status reports in real time far more efficiently, wherever they might be.

All traffic between the BlackBerry handheld and its server is encrypted and if ever a unit is lost or stolen, it can be remotely 'killed' to preserve the integrity of its stored information. If a user is ever without cellphone coverage, the BlackBerry automatically updates as soon as that coverage is restored.

One of many instances in which the Blackberry and Fusion5's Envisage software has boosted the service, sales and efficiency of an operation is in the case of a firm that services Automatic Teller Machines. That business originally equipped its technicians with laptops but soon found that startup time, battery life, and laptop security was a challenge impeding on their ability to provide optimum service.

Since Fusion5 provided an application for use with the BlackBerry, the ATM servicing firm's efficiency in dealing with callouts has improved enormously. A call from a bank about a fault is now emailed directly to a technician who can respond and report back in detail and in real time.

Another example of where Fusion5 BlackBerry solutions have resulted in time-saving efficiency is all to do with graffiti busting. Civic Contractors have a contract with the Auckland City Council to quickly remove graffiti once a complaint has been received.

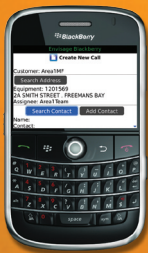
In the past, Civic Contractors' employees called at their offices daily to receive hard copy job sheets and file reports of jobs completed. All that cost in time and travel is now saved since those employees have been equipped with the BlackBerry using Fusion5's Envisage Support Centre Management software.

Once a complaint is received by the Auckland City Council's call centre staff, the graffiti complaint is logged into Envisage and transmitted to the BlackBerry carried by the Civic Contractors' employee closest to the area concerned.

Not only is the response time faster but the administration formerly done at the office is now effortlessly completed in the field by means of the BlackBerry. Staff can open a new job as soon as received and report on work carried out in real time. Before and after photos of the job can also be taken with the BlackBerry and transmitted to the database immediately accessible to Council staff and the police.

But as well as this real time interface with centralized databases, the convergence of so many technologies into a reliable, portable unit makes the BlackBerry one of the most advanced pieces of communication equipment now available. This extension of unified communication technology to mobile devices is an advancement that should not be missed by the security industry.

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