

Oren Feldmann, EVT Technology:

"Video surveillance is

Detektor International met up with Oren Feldmann, VP Sales & Marketing at EVT Technology to discuss things like how "fun" can improve the effectiveness of video surveillance and why EVT's offering is unique. The discussions also gave Detektor some interesting insights into the Israeli eagerness to succeed and its culture and business environment, with a focus on security matters.

By Christian Schiller

To begin with, can you give me a brief description of EVT?

– EVT as a company started out 5 years ago as a Linux based DVR manufacturer. In 2006, EVT shifted focus and started the development of its windows-based Client Server Video Management and recording Software suit.

Late 2007 EVT recruited a new management team to take the newly developed product offering to the market. I was brought from Mango DSP to fill the VP R&D position. In the last year we have been branding EVT and brought our products to many distributors around the world. The philosophy behind the company and the way we work is that we strengthen our existing distributors on the way.

What is unique about EVT's video management software?

– EVT's main advantage over other solutions is the fun and user-friendly interface. If you would say that your security technology was fun 10 years ago people would look at you and say "This is surveillance man, fun is not a part of this game". Today the market is eager to have the software as friendly and simple as possible for the operator. Having an operator sitting all day long in front of a screen, the last thing he would want is to work with boring software. We supply the operator with a fun and easy to use tool to perform his job, with many similarities from the computer game world.

Another unique advantage is EVT's perspective of seeking solutions, rather than striving to maximise a set of features to present in a list. With the help of our 2.5 maps, video is embedded within

the map with a distance correction feature making it very easy to understand. Our image content navigation is a unique event tracking tool that allows any operator to track an event amongst 10, 100 or even thousands of cameras.

It allows you to move from one video stream to any other video stream in a logical and intuitive way. This is particularly useful when following a perpetrator from scene to scene.

Is your software based on an open platform?

– Yes, we can integrate with any hardware. We develop our software to be as integration friendly as possible. Integrating a new family of devices to the EVT software takes between 7-14 days, adding another product from that same family could take from a couple of minutes to a couple of hours. In the video analytic arena we currently support Object Video, ioimage, Mate and Agent Vi.

Speaking of open platforms, do you believe that proprietary video management systems will continue to live on?

– You don't need to ask me that, if you take a look at the latest research on this you will see that the proprietary market constitutes less than 10 percent of the whole video management systems market. Today, with all the fast-evolving technologies, we won't know who will be the leader of network cameras tomorrow or who will be the leader in intelligent video and so on. The last thing you would want to do is to limit users to hardware manufacturers that you like or are making money from. Proprietary video management software will not die;



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it will continue to live with very strong companies that are project focused. Nice for instance, they use proprietary systems, but they also take care of the full project. Proprietary software will continue to live on in large-scale projects even in the long run.

What major trends do you see in the security market right now?

– One strong trend is integration with third party systems; one of the things we encounter is that customers would like their video management system to integrate with other applications, like fire alarms and so on. Another area where we see a lot of interest is video analytics. More than 80 percent of the projects that we are involved in require video analytics in at least one camera.

Is video analytics fully commercially viable at this point?

– Definitely, but not for all types of applications. The hype around intelligent video that we saw much of last year has come to an end. What we see now is a

segmentation of companies that are dedicating their efforts into specific market segments, and they are good at it and they are growing in those verticals. It takes training and optimisation, but still it works very well under the right conditions. Most of the intelligent video companies today require training prior to installation, so you won't come back and say that "Hey, we deployed it but it doesn't work, too many false alarms and too few real alarms".

The global economy is now facing a major slow-down, how will that affect the video surveillance industry?

– I think that people will be shorter on pulling the money out; bids that were closed faster a year ago will take longer now. We need to remember that the tenders in the video surveillance market are very long, so the effects of these economic changes will only take place in 2009. I think that the addiction to information is stronger than any change you can feel from the world economy. People want

addictive”

to know, and video is addictive. You start off with 10 cameras and it grows to 20 very fast. Yesterday you knew what happened around your house, tomorrow you want to know what's going on in your attic. This is very easy to understand, I like to use the example of cell phones. 10 years ago you had a phone in your house; you didn't even have an answering machine. Today, you can't even go to the toilet without your cell phone. We are addicted to knowing what's going on around us.

Is the harsher social environment, including terrorism, is a driver for your theory?

– If we look at terror attacks, border problems, crime and vandalism in general it's clear that the world isn't getting friendlier. Therefore I strongly believe that the video surveillance market will continue to grow on, notwithstanding the economic climate.

Will security technology ever fully prevent terrorism?

– If we look at preventing terrorism in facilities for example, technology is a helper but not much more. I think the investments against terrorism should be in high quality human resources efforts. Coming from where I come from and seeing what I have seen, the only real way to deal with terror attacks is the use of human intelligence. The only one that will be able to determine whether there is an attack going on or simply if someone smoked something bad, is someone standing in front of the suspect and looking him into his eyes, seeing if he's sweating, shaking and so on. Video surveillance is a helper; it can determine whether someone is loitering in an area, which you then can check up. But in the end, it's always up to a human to evaluate the situation.

Technology that really can help is software that consolidates information on people and where they are located. Again, this is not 100 percent fool proof, but it can really contribute to spot possible attacks in time.

EVT, as well as many other high-tech security companies, are located in Israel. What is the reason to this high concentration?

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– I think that the Israeli eagerness to succeed is an important factor. If you look at an Israeli's life, going through kindergarten, high school, army and to come back home to Israel from the post-military trip, the eagerness to succeed is just amazing. To give you a picture, look at many western countries around the world, you can see that low status jobs like waitresses stay in their profession for many years, and probably feel good about it. In Israel you will see that all of the waitresses are part-time working students between the ages of 20 to 28, that's it. You will never see a waitress at the age of 45 in Israel. More than 80 percent of the Israelis are university educated. In Israeli high-tech companies we start to work at 8-9 in the morning and finish at midnight, and that's our lives, that's how we work. I believe that this culture has got its flaws though; going too fast can be problematic. In most companies in Israel you will see that the CEO almost always is someone with experience from outside of Israel. In EVT for instance, our general manager came back from Australia after 15 years work. Our way of combining the Israeli drive with top management with experience from outside of Israel, can combine the eagerness to succeed with a sound way of planning. The top level management needs to be able to build block by block, and not rush away and deliver something that's not finished.

Is the government of Israel supporting local security companies?

– Not at all, but you can of course get funding like everywhere else. Most of the companies that come from Israel have done it all by themselves, funding has come from private investments. So no, there is no “agenda” by the Israeli government to support security companies.

So there is no connection between the government, the military and security companies in Israel?

– No, but we think security from the day we are born. That's what we live and that's what we think. Because of the way Israel is built, and the problems surrounding it, it's easier for us to assess security problems than probably any other nationality. The security awareness basically comes from all the years we spend in the army. For some technological issues, the government is a good testing point. Look at fencing for instance, because Israel's borders are so problematic, companies that have done fencing around the Israeli borders have much more experience than anyone else in the world. People try to penetrate their fences every hour, so of course the fences are world-class.

Which end-users sectors have the most potential for EVT at this point?

– Because EVT's software is so diverse and flexible, it could fit from a local gas station up to an airport or even a city with thousands of cameras, it goes the whole way. The software is built on a core with modules around it. We did this to avoid the end-users getting huge overhead expenses; you pay for what you need. That is the reason we can penetrate many vertical markets. We have projects going on from railroads, airports, jails, shopping malls, universities, everything one can imagine.

It is often stated that monitoring operators lose almost all of their attention in a short time; do you think that your “fun” system could help avoid this?

– Yes, for a few reasons. First, we integrate alerts from many different devices. We eliminate the need for an operator to kill their eyes looking at the system, instead they only need to pay attention when something of interest happens.

Another reason is that our system is fun to play with, so it won't be so hard on the operator when he performs his once an hour tour of the system. Another thing that is important to highlight is that all of us are afraid of things we don't know. Once you eliminate that and give people something they feel comfortable with, they will use it more and won't be afraid to play with it. Once you relieve the operator of that stress, the effectiveness of course must be higher.

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Which are your main competitors?

– Genetec and Milestone, mostly because of the fact that they share the open platform philosophy. I would also add Nice, EVT meets them in a lot of projects. I can say with confidence that I don't think they consider us competition, at least not yet. It will take some time, they are big and have been in the market for many years and have their regular standard clients.

If you were to send one message to the security industry, what would it be?

– Think about your users and think about video surveillance, and then try to solve the problems. Don't try to force technology on the market, build the technology according to what the market needs. That's my definitive message. That's what we try to do. ■