

More Than Meets the Eye - Cloud Video Surveillance

By Ralph C. Jensen

With a multitude of cloud providers vying for market share to store your data and provide cloud computing, creating your own data center deployments with associated hardware, networking and storage systems, doesn't generally top the list of additional headaches one might pursue in today's world, unless you are Dean Drako.

Drako, the CEO and founder of Eagle Eye Networks, provider of cloud-based video surveillance solutions, based in Austin, Texas, understands the Internet, networking and cyber security. If Barracuda Networks comes to mind, you would be right. He was the founder of the global cyber security company that specializes in providing cloud-based firewalls, virus and spam protection—all delivered by way of a cloud subscription service.

Although he could have outsourced his cloud needs to the likes of AWS, Microsoft Azure or Google, Drako chose to build out his own cloud infrastructure to obtain the needed layers of security, guarantee compliance with local regulations, reach the necessary price points and minimize video latency.

"One of the keys to building a successful cloud and cyber business is owning the technology and infrastructure from end to end so you can deliver the best product," Drako said. "We deploy our own hardware and storage designed specifically for video. This also means we have the in-house skills to clear any hurdle and solve any customer problem or need. To provide the best global solution for surveillance video, I could not afford to take the risk of outsourcing our cloud needs."

Starting in North America, Drako grew his cloud capacity worldwide to meet the demands of the growing international business.

"As I see it, everything is moving to the cloud," Drako said. "Video and security systems will be no different. ERPs, CRMs, billing systems, email, collaboration services, screen sharing; they have all moved to the cloud. Video in the cloud has so many advantages over being on premise. Once the data is in the cloud you can do so much more with it such as: redundancy, analytics, artificial intelligence, big data analysis, sharing, and more."

Further Than the Eye Can See

Since its inception in 2012, Eagle Eye has



Dean Drako

launched data centers all over the world and Drako has taken cloud video surveillance application to an all-time high. While North America was first in Drako's sights, covering the world was always the goal. In 2013 and 2014, Drako built out video surveillance infrastructure in four data centers covering North America and then turned his attention to Asia.

"Developing a channel and winning customers in Asia Pacific at an early stage was a real challenge and a benefit to the company," Drako said. "My experience has been that the Asia Pacific market can drive a great deal of innovation with their differing market needs and demands. This kind of environment is great for a technology company to learn key internationalization lessons."

Based on this business principle, Drako launched two data center locations in Tokyo and quickly became a recognized cloud video surveillance brand in the region.

In late 2015, Drako moved the growth focus to Europe and the Middle East. The company's first data center was launched in London with plans that the region would experience the same type of rapid growth as North America and Asia Pacific. Unfortunately, the 2016 calendar year showed lackluster performance in the European market.



Ken Francis

This prompted Drako to search for a bigger way to enter the European market while remaining true to the business strategy. Cloud was going to take off in Europe; it was just a matter of time.

In the summer of 2016, Drako hired security industry veteran Ken Francis to serve as president of Eagle Eye and run its day to day operations. Francis formerly operated global security manufacturing businesses for the United Technology Corporation, GE Security and Group 4, and was instrumental in the development of their global channels and go-to-market strategies.

An Eye on the Prize

After considering many organic and acquisitive alternatives, Drako and Francis found their diamond in the rough in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Amsterdam is considered one of the startup hubs of Europe with numerous technology companies succeeding or failing based on the tangible value of their services. In Amsterdam, they found the ideal acquisition committed to Eagle Eye's same cloud strategy, including a focus on commercial solutions and the development of purpose built cloud systems. CameraManager, was founded by Rishi Lodhia and Tijmen



Rishi Lodhia

Vos in 2005, and shares a unique characteristic with Eagle Eye Networks. They both built their own cloud. They don't use or license anyone else's cloud. Not Amazon. Not Google. Not Microsoft.

By acquiring the Amsterdam-based business, Eagle Eye immediately benefited from both a geographic and a product perspective. In addition to the CameraManager platform, Lodhia and Vos had developed an exciting new 4G camera solution, Nubo, which operates independently and also integrates nicely with the CameraManager platform for cloud management. The CameraManager and Nubo products are designed for the reseller seeking a private labeled camera-to-cloud video system. CameraManager is already the choice of several of Europe and the Middle East's largest alarm systems providers and is now coming to North and South America.

"Combining our business with Eagle Eye Networks was an incredible opportunity," Lodhia said. "Eagle Eye is growing rapidly in North America and Asia; we were the perfect fit at the right moment for Europe, and Eagle Eye got a second cloud platform for the program dealer segment."

In Amsterdam, the Eagle Eye data center resides in a non-descript Tier 4 data center facility, encircled by a steel fence with concertina wire on top of it. Inside the datacenter a visitor gets the ultra-high security impression as they are processed through multiple biometric checkpoints and mantraps to eventually gain access to an impressive bank of servers and storage machines.

The Amsterdam Eagle Eye office is only a few miles away, and is easily accessible to the data center. As many as six team members



might be found at the center at any given time to ensure that the facility is humming along quietly and efficiently. The Amsterdam-based Eagle Eye staff is responsible for Europe, the Middle East, Asia and India. That will grow as other data centers and offices are brought on line. Eagle Eye Europe is currently working on expanding operations in Germany and France.

One of Eagle Eye Networks' channel partners, Fortezza Security Systems' Stefan de Haas works just outside of Amsterdam, but has plenty of work in the city. He said offering "true" cloud video surveillance and being able to provide cyber security in the offering makes all the difference.

"Our goal as a security company is to protect the infrastructure and update constantly," de Haas said. "We monitor what's happening with our end user's networks, engage with them and manage their security protocols. We work closely with Eagle Eye to ensure that we are offering the latest cloud features, and that our customers are taking advantage of the cloud to save money and get better service."

Engineering the Cloud

Everything that Drako and his team are doing is what they characterize as "True Cloud." According to Francis, "a True Cloud system is specifically engineered for cloud computing and, offered as a pay-for-what-you-use subscription model. It affordably and securely provides scalable system capabilities that can't possibly be achieved in on-site systems."

In terms of what's next for Eagle Eye Networks, Drako says the company has a few areas of focus to continue geographic expansion; South America and the Caribbean states. He also describes what sounds like yet another large investment in the company's future;

based on machine learning and AI (artificial intelligence).

The application of artificial intelligence to video surveillance, specifically, AI applications need the global data centers to provide the necessary computational power and AI applications are being developed to improve the data centers themselves. So, data centers are both serving and being served by artificial intelligence.

"Our goal is to be the global provider of choice for video surveillance in the security industry," Drako said. "We fully expect to expand to mobile camera solutions, act as the premier provider of cloud video surveillance and manage all of this safely and cyber securely."

Ambitious? Perhaps.

Drako is meeting these goals by building out a global infrastructure well in advance of selling products or services. With a global infrastructure, localized languages for each country, and local support and data centers, Eagle Eye is able to comply with local video surveillance regulations and provide a local product. Local integrators can latch onto cloud video surveillance by offering an end user a secure remotely accessible cloud solution and gaining recurring monthly revenue.

In the minds' eye, data center, video storage and all that comes with it, including AI, deep learning, and machine learning are all fitting nicely in a security package. Technology is changing fast in the video surveillance space. You better start moving to the cloud. 📡

Ralph C. Jensen is the editor in chief of Security Today magazine.

