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Volume 4 | Issue 3 | May 2014

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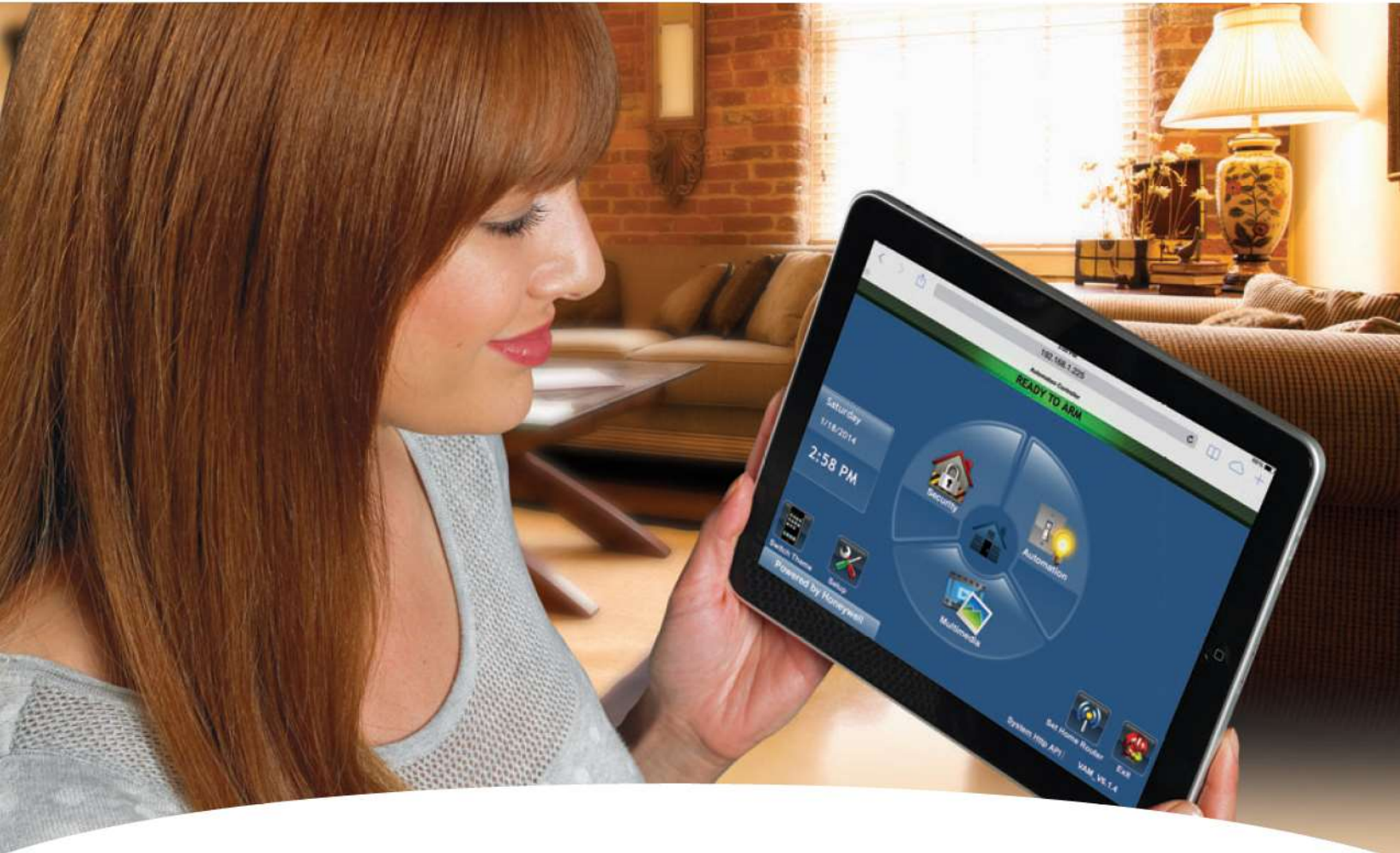
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By Ralph C. Jensen

No Age Limits

Every day for the past few years while driving to work, I have passed a company sign that reads, "STS360." I had no idea what this company did, but like the inquisitive journalist that I am, I performed a Google search. In fact, that is the first thing I do each morning—search the Internet for websites from keywords that I have seen that morning. I like knowing what people do.

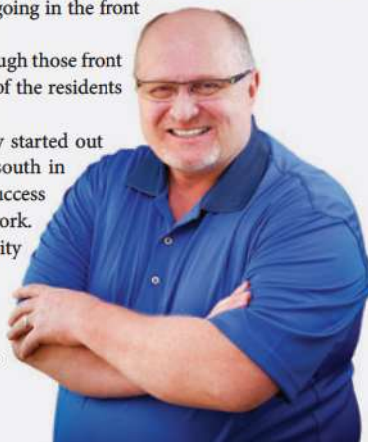
While at the STS360 website, I learned that this company is part of the security family, so naturally, I wanted to know more.

Upon further exploration, I found Jessica Clark, chief operating officer at STS360, along with her boss, Bobby Khullar, the CEO and president. Clark is the one getting on the ground and mixing it up with end users and their own installers. In fact, she said that while many people would not want to work at a correctional facility, she actually looked forward to going in the front gates and getting to work.

Hmmm...not me. I don't think I would be going through those front gates. Thing is, I wouldn't want to be mistaken for one of the residents and unable to get back out at the end of the day.

STS360 is a fascinating story. As you will read, they started out with four employees, and despite the economy going south in 2008, their business started to boom. Much of this success rests on Clark. She is a hustler and not afraid to go find work. She stays busy and is thoroughly excited about the security marketplace.

I hope you enjoy reading this piece as much as I enjoyed interviewing for it. *DS*



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

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ON THE COVER

Jessica Clark, COO, and Bobby Khullar, president of STS360 take a few moments from their always hectic schedule to talk about life as an integrator, and their work in the Texas prison system. The young company is based in Plano, Texas.

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By Ralph C. Jensen



SECURITY, AT WARP SPEED



There is no telling what an appetite for success and a passion for technology will produce. One thing for certain, the desire to give the customer the best security solution possible will likely bear a long-term, winning combination.

Jessica Clark, age 36, has that passion, and her recipe for success should be patented, if it isn't already. Years ago, Clark was an art student in New York, who completed her studies but had a rough time finding employment. To make ends meet, and because she is a person who works smart, she took temporary employment as a receptionist.

Call it providence, but Clark took advantage of the time while working at

an IT company by reading and studying potential job plans. First she studied, and then Clark began to make grammar and style corrections on a \$75 million proposal the contracts department was working on. Once she had the concepts in place, she began to offer suggestions that seemed to make a job easier, more efficient and profitable, and by the time the company won the contract only she and a consultant were left working on it.

Her diligence in asking what the company was doing and if she could join in the planning meant the temporary job didn't last long. She was soon hired full-time as a valued member of the professional staff. Her desire to learn brought her in touch with Bobby Khullar, who was the executive vice president at the IT firm.

A great professional relationship was soon hatched.

BLOSSOMING INTO SECURITY

In 2000, Khullar founded Sigma ITPD. This company supported thousands of desktops and mostly attended to the needs of the government, in particular, the Navy; but by 2005, the market was getting a little too tough, and profit margins were getting slimmer by the month and Sigma Surveillance was born.

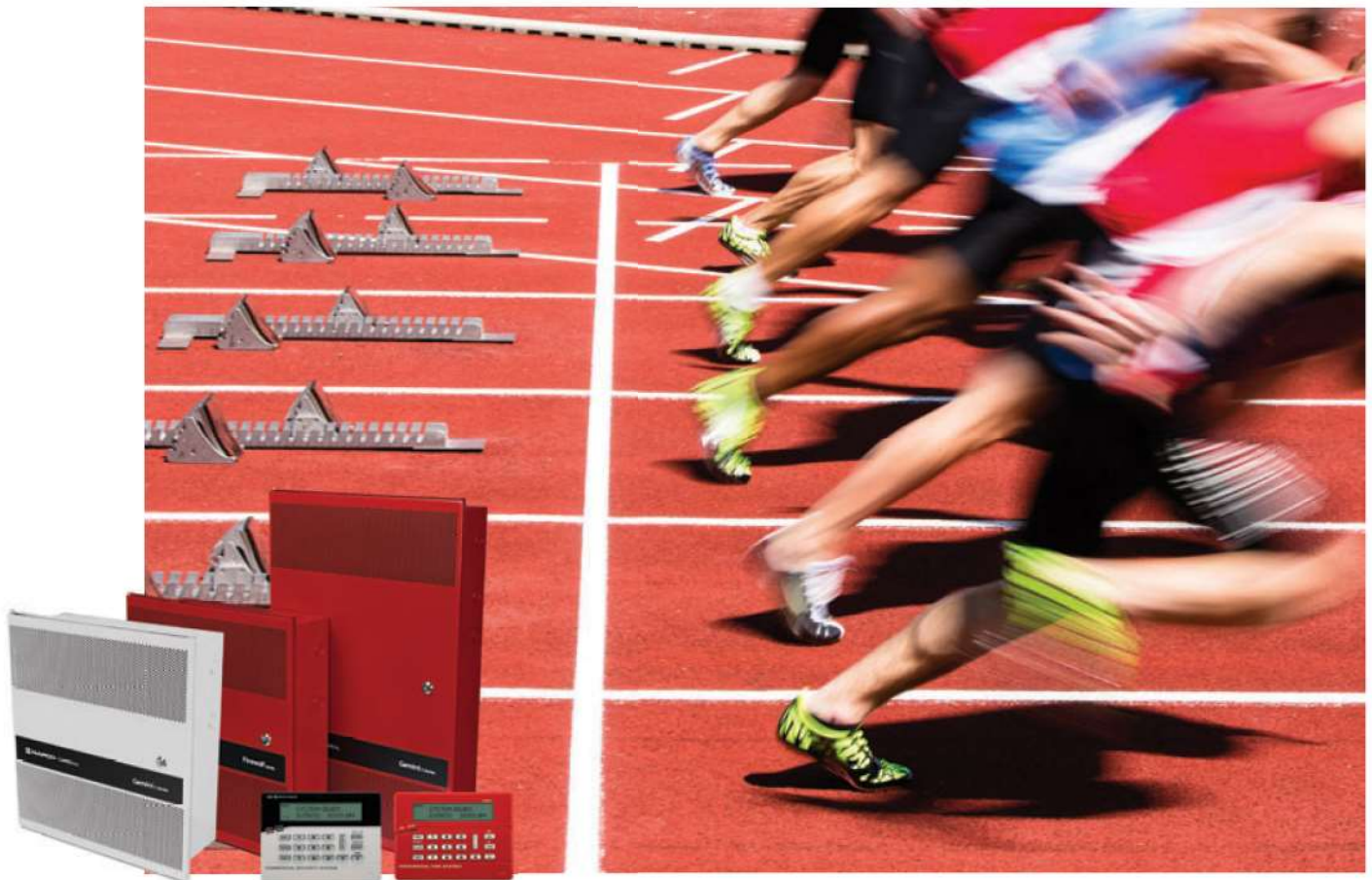
Khullar wanted to move in a different direction and felt that the security industry was a natural progression. Sigma Surveillance began building and marketing a series of DVRs, affectionately called "Dali DVR"—named after the famed surrealist artist Salvador Dali. This product is still being built and sold, but by 2008, the business needed to move in yet another direction. Sigma soon became STS360, currently based in Plano, Texas.

As the security market was feeling the pinch by a stalling economy in the early 2000s, STS360 was just getting off the ground. Probably not the best year to launch a new business, but for this small integrator, business was taking off. And, being a Texas-based company probably helped as the economy in the Lone Star State was still riding the crest of a higher wave of prosperity.

"Once we decided to go fully into the security market, Jessica was very aggressive to advance the company and stand out from the competition as an IP video surveillance integrator," Khullar said. "Jessica also established a solid relationship with OnSSI as a platinum partner with their video management system."

STS360 started with four employees and had very modest revenue: \$500,000. Growth was projected, but it would take a couple years to realize substantial margins; however, Khullar and Clark were in it for the long haul, and both knew security was the right place to be.

"The first year, I started out as the business development director, sales person and writing proposals," Clark said. "Once we were awarded the Texas Department of Information Resources contracts, we quickly became a recognized state vendor, and the work really started to take off. We primarily work in the



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A short time later, revenue more than doubled, and by 2009, contracts and work nearly doubled again. In 2010, the company began to hit its projected stride.

HARDCORE SECURITY

STS360 was awarded a security contract by the state of Texas’ Depart-

ment of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) for the Polunsky Unit in Livingston, Texas. This was no ordinary contract, for any company, and not for the faint of heart. Texas houses its death row inmates and has a maximum capacity of 2,900 inmates. This unit, located about 60 miles east of Huntsville, along the Big Thicket, also houses Texas’ supermax units.

Working at the Polunsky Unit

takes nerve and expertise.

“I’ve always been sort of a tomboy, so working at a prison site didn’t bother me at all,” Clark said. “Some people get to the front gates of a prison and have second thoughts about going on in to work. I really took it in stride and was excited about every day of work inside the prison.”

Being the chief operation officer of STS360 didn’t offer Clark a pass

of not getting involved, rather it was sort of an invitation to put hands on a work project and really be a part of company business. Certainly, Clark spends time behind a desk with the mandatory paperwork and executive issues, but she also like mixing it up with the work crews in the field, which is yet another talent of her management style.

Clark said that the executive staff at the company leans toward hiring staff that is IT savvy, construction centric and that has industry talent. It seems to offer them a team that is trained from the start, which also minimizes the learning curve. This also means that the integration staff is up-to-speed on the latest designs and IP video surveillance solutions.

“When we walked into the prison, we devoted our time to comprehensive IP solutions,” Clark said. “The prison had an older system in place that needed to be completely overhauled and expanded greatly. We walked in with a completely networked system that offered the latest information to the administration, along with high-resolution images.”

STS360 took advantage of their new-found success at the prison by laying in thousands of feet of conduit, building new network closets where previously there was no connectivity at all throughout the hundreds of acres, and installing new servers, power supplies and emergency response power abilities, as well as visitation phone monitoring, detection control systems and video intercom.

Work completed at the Polunsky Unit has led to other TDCJ work at the Stiles Unit near Beaumont, Texas, and the Darrington Unit, south of Houston, in Rosharon, Texas. STS360 also has ongoing work at 12 Texas prisons.

“It’s not that Texas is building more prisons; they are simply upgrading the security systems at the facilities statewide,” Clark said. “We are pleased to be able to protect those workers and staff at the prison sites, and seeing the return on investment the very moment these systems start rolling out is unparalleled and rewarding. It has literally changed the culture of the way the wardens can manage their units and the department can train its staff.”



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FINDING SUCCESS IN THE INDUSTRY

This kind of hard work and a successful 2013 keeps the wheels in motion for Clark and her staff. She said that last year was a banner year for this company, and revenues showed healthy increases and the ability to meet, and even surpass, their financial goals. This company is able to bid

on any security install that it wants, thanks to the ability to present a \$5 million bond on any project.

Some may call this luck, but Clark freely admits it is the willingness to take advantage of luck, or prosperity, when you come face-to-face with an opportunity to grow a business.

"When it is time to step up and grow a business, that is where my

strength lies," Clark said. "I'm loyal to a fault, but I also believe in what we are doing as an executive team and as a company team. What I really enjoy as a business executive is helping people succeed. No matter what a person does on the job, they want to be good at it, and we want the same experience for them."

HISTORICAL ROOTS AND INTO THE FUTURE

Khullar and Clark's story goes back 17 years, and it seems to detail how two people can take a start-up security company during lean economic times and make a successful run.

"Jessica understands my business management style, and she stays one step ahead of me," Khuller said. "She is always thinking several years ahead, and that's our success story. We never delved into the analog market because we saw IP video surveillance as the future. Because we understand the digital world and embrace it, we thrive."

Their booming business strategy is all organic growth. STS360 is determined to stay debt free and retain the ability to work anywhere, at any time. For a company that started with four employees and one small office in Plano, Texas, growth is always on their mind.

Because they depend upon organic growth, they develop resources as they go along and have hired a tremendous staff of system engineers. Their four-employee model has now grown to more than 20 workers; the company has a satellite office in Houston, Texas with four employees; and they have recently opened an office in Austin, Texas.

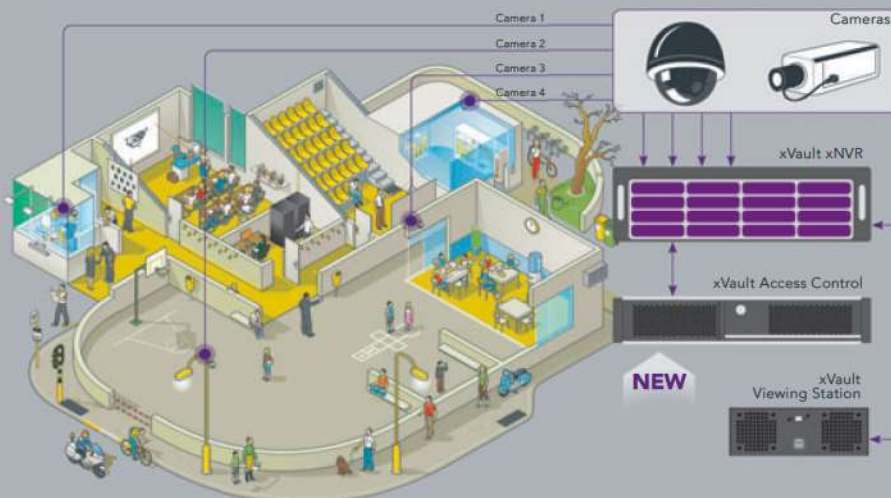
"Our business plan marries a technical project manager with a sales person, one-to-one, which allows us to build a strong customer support team," Clark said. "Our staff knows what they are talking about when it comes to bidding a job, and they work well together to keep the customer at ease and involved in the project."

Clark keeps the ball rolling. She said that she was taught as a girl to have confidence in all that she does, even in the man's world of security integration. She said that she has the DNA to look critically at a potential job and make decisions that most people can't or won't make. The small business environment suits her professional needs, and personally, she sees a very bright future for the security industry for many years to come. *DS*

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

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