TMA/SSI Monitoring Technology

THE **MARVEL**

CRIME PREVENTION:
A VISION FOR OUR INDUSTRY'S FUTURE

Our 2024 Monitoring Technology Marvel Award recipient, Elite Interactive Solutions, has a prevention-focused approach to commercial spaces that is garnering significant attention.

By Amala Reddie

THE MONITORING TECHNOLOGY MARVEL AWARD, which *Security Sales & Integration (SSI)* and The Monitoring Association (TMA) cosponsor, recognizes professional monitoring centers and solutions providers for their innovation and/or their implementation of new technology.

This year's winner is Los Angeles-based crime prevention provider Elite Interactive Solutions.

CEO Aria Kozak, often referred to as "The Father of Remote Guarding," founded Elite in 2007. (Notably, Kozak was elected to the 2024 *SSI* Industry Hall of Fame.) The company's crime-prevention offerings incorporate custom-calibrated video analytics and artificial intelligence, machine learning, highly skilled Security Operations Command Center (SOCC) agents and trusted law-enforcement partnerships.

The company's breadth of services includes system design, installation, monitoring and maintenance for myriad vertical markets, which range from commercial and multifamily housing units to auto dealerships, shopping centers and campus environments.

In addition to Elite's primary offices being in Los Angeles, its state-of-the-

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(L-R): Michael Zatulov, Aria Kozak and Noel Delgado, executives from Elite Interactive Solutions. They help drive the company's technology-driven business model.

art, UL-Listed SOCC is located in a fully secure, subterranean datacenter downtown. The company employs more than 70 people, and it provides services to thousands of clients nationwide in more than a dozen states.

Elite's ties to the first-responder community are evidenced by its endorsement by the FBI-LEEDA organization and the company's Law Enforcement Advisory Board (LEAB), which is composed of former high-ranking law-enforcement professionals.

These are just some of the reasons that Elite earned the 2024 Monitoring Technology Marvel Award. Here, Scott Goldfine, marketing director, sits down with *SSI* — the magazine he formerly helmed for 25 years — to provide insights into the company's legacy, while also spotlighting how the company upholds its approaches when implementing solutions and services.

Leadership and Background

According to Goldfine, Elite's success in crime prevention stems from CEO and founder Aria Kozak's own experiences and his commitment to preventing dangerous acts and capturing lawbreakers.

"From 1976 to 1990, [Kozak] founded and built Universal Alarm Systems into one of the nation's largest and most successful burglar alarm and armed-guard response companies," he explains. "He then sold Universal to ADT in 1990, remaining as a consultant."

Thereafter, in 1996, Kozak launched a high-end integration firm, IntelliSec, which engineered, installed, monitored and serviced a variety of highly complex projects. After robustly growing IntelliSec, Kozak left the company in 2002 and founded Elite Interactive Solutions.

Goldfine adds, "When Elite was launched, the vision was not for the company to take on the role of an integrator but, rather, to focus on the core offering

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of crime prevention via remote video guarding through the SOCC."

However, on Elite's launch, Goldfine notes, it soon became clear that the only way for Elite to deliver on its mission of real-time crime prevention was to forensically design, install and maintain the surveillance systems.

As he puts it, "By and large, the dealer and integrator community did not yet understand the technologies or methodologies."

Most integrators seemed to prefer a project-based approach, as opposed to a recurring monthly revenue (RMR)-oriented business model.

"Thus, out of necessity, Elite became an end-to-end remote video guarding solution provider, being both an integrator and a UL-Listed central monitoring station 100% dedicated to video surveillance and response," Goldfine remarks.

Earlier this year, the company introduced the Elite Channel Partner program,

a reflection of the notion that, now, integrators are willing and able to engage in the offering and business model.

"Ultimately, Elite would like to work with a capable network of integrator partners and focus on its core specialty of remote video monitoring and proactive, real-time crime prevention," Goldfine underscores.

Main Approaches

Goldfine identifies several approaches that underpin Elite's vision and mission in the crime prevention space. These are just a few:

- Real-time crime prevention is made possible via the deployment of a stack of technological tools.
- Teaming with software development companies, Elite's engineering techniques provide a proprietary methodology for reduction of false alarms.
- Physical security experts perform advanced site design, with forensic

engineering, calibration and maintenance.

- Multiple security applications and devices are integrated and controlled through a single user interface to collect, organize and report incidents and audit operator activity.
- Elite's detectors go through rigorous tests in darkness, at distance and with background movement to ensure nothing is missed.
- Elite uses a cybersecurity industry standard, highly secure remote-access platform and follows implementation best practices.

Relying on these approaches, Elite's SOCC can leverage video surveillance monitoring by incorporating a fully integrated technology stack featuring custom-calibrated analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning, along with forensically engineered site system designs to "eliminate the noise" and not miss events.

As Goldfine states, "[The above] prime technologies, integrations and implementations [make it] possible to facilitate true, real-time crime prevention to customer sites."

Emphasis on Remote Monitoring

Goldfine reveals that Kozak knew that, with remote monitoring, there was a better path. He spent many decades pursuing his vision: Not only to stop false alarms but also to shift from deterrence to prevention and from reactivity to proactivity.

He remarks, "[Kozak] took his companies through every iteration of technological breakthroughs that incrementally moved the needle toward full realization of his crime-prevention vision with zero false alarms."

As Goldfine describes it, remote guarding combines video monitoring and voice-downs, noise reduction (alarm filtering), specialized command center agents and an alliance with law enforcement.

However, he cautions that, while this formula is theoretically achievable by any practitioner, it's also true that confusion, murkiness and even deception surround the term "remote guarding."

According to Goldfine, "There is much more to it, for example, than video or audio monitoring alone, video verification of alarm signals or prerecorded audio warnings."

Goldfine believes that remote video guarding is where the security industry is heading, and he believes that the security channel at large is coming to the same conclusion.

"This technology, which optimizes video surveillance and video analytics, has been among the most highly discussed and promoted developments at security conferences and events since 2023," he says. Indeed, he believes it holds potential to boost the security business as a whole.

According to Goldfine, remote video guarding acts as a force multiplier, augmenting or fully replacing manned guards. The so-called digital guards — cameras combined with AI, analytics,

IP speakers and highly trained remote agents performing voice-downs — are more effective and efficient than humans could be.
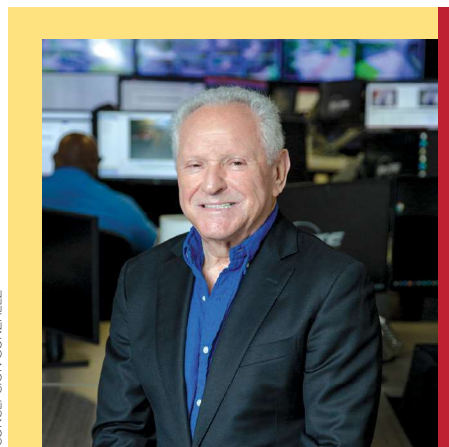
"They are also more cost-effective, at one-third to one-half the expense," he adds.

AI and analytics play a major role in the 16 different technologies/methodologies that Elite combines to reduce "noise," not miss events, eliminate false alarms and prevent crime.

"AI and analytics are important elements and enablers but bring [little to no] value in the absence of all the other ingredients...," Goldfine says. "To that end, while Elite uses some off-the-shelf products and software, it is all custom calibrated by working directly with the vendors to render the ultimate solution."

The recipient of that solution is Elite's customer base, which primarily consists of enterprise-level commercial and industrial sites. Also included are the residences of several high-profile individuals and government officials.

"The company does not monitor typical single-family homes," Goldfine clarifies.

"It is a high end, rather than consumer grade, offering."

Broadly, the solution suits virtually any vertical-market application, including multifamily, auto dealerships, campuses and retailers.

As Goldfine explains it, "While there are myriad use cases, the solution is ideal for situations where there are high-value assets outdoors or left unattended overnight [or on] weekends."

AI and Analytics

On the topic of AI and analytics, Goldfine makes the case that optimal use depends on how the video-surveillance system is structured and how the cameras are laid out at customer sites. Elite's philosophy comes down to "less is more."

As Goldfine emphasizes, "The objective is positioning cameras for detection and choking crime, rather than the traditional approach using lots of cameras to cover every square foot."

These forensically engineered deployments typically require at the most 20 cameras — and, often, far fewer. Depending on the application, the company deploys a mix of mostly fixed, some PTZ and, as appropriate, thermal imaging cameras.

"Oftentimes, clients combine them with additional cameras on a site that Elite refers to as administrative because they are not part of the focused crime and catastrophe solution," Goldfine adds.

Elite agents use these cameras to track the path of a suspect as a means of heightening situational awareness and reducing client-liability exposure.

Aria Kozak, often referred to as 'The Father of Remote Guarding,' founded Elite in 2007. Notably, Kozak, who serves as CEO, was just elected to the 2024 _SSI_ Industry Hall of Fame.

"Elite agents have their eyes on a crime site and execute a live, suspect-specific voice-down to suspects within an average time of seven seconds," Goldfine reveals.

Leveraging its technology, the company performs at this level with far fewer agents than those in traditional monitoring centers.

As Goldfine explains, "[This is because] the solution so effectively filters out the

noise to allow the focus to be on actual events."

In 2023, 102 million hours of video and audio data were streamed into Elite's monitoring center, Goldfine reports. Due to the deployment of AI/analytics technologies, it only required 55,200 monitoring agent person-hours to process that footage, which led to approximately 72,000 in-house and 1,000 police-aided crime preventions.
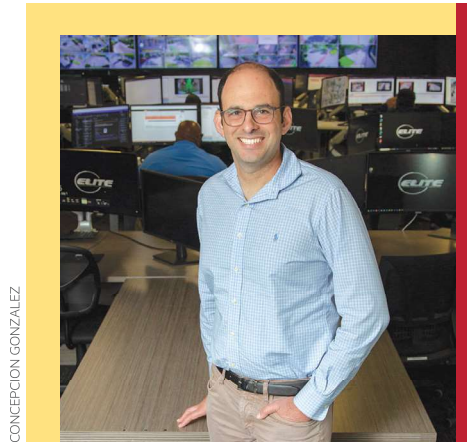
Mapping The Journey Ahead

Goldfine expresses enthusiasm about Elite's future, adding, "Elite is growing at a much faster clip than the overall industry, and that will not slow down in the foreseeable future."

He shares an optimistic outlook for remote video guarding overall, saying that market penetration is still in its infancy.

"In addition, this type of sophisticated offering generates higher-dollar recurring revenue per account than the industry has ever seen before," Goldfine says.

Elite plans to continue to strengthen the four pillars that undergird its solution: 1) forensically designed surveillance systems deployed on monitored sites; 2) the latest video imagery and purpose-engineered and integrated analytics and AI; 3) a monitoring command center with highly skilled ex-law enforcement and military personnel able to defuse crime situations using voice-down audio; and 4) tight relationships with law enforcement to support and assist their efforts, with more possibilities to come.

As Goldfine states, "[Elite] remains

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Elite Interactive Solutions' president and COO, Michael Zatulov, is part of an in-house leadership team that complements the company's tight law-enforcement partnerships.

vigilant in evaluating, vetting and implementing newer, even more advanced technologies."

Indeed, Goldfine wants security industry stakeholders to think of Elite more as a technology than as a security or monitoring company.

"Innovation, vision and disruption — emanating from CEO and founder Aria Kozak — lies at its heart, ensuring the business and its offerings never fall into complacency," he declares.

Upholding Relationships

Turning back to Elite's LEAB, which consists of current and former law-enforcement officials who continue to uphold relationships with agencies nationwide, it has been a powerful initiative for the company.

Members educate those agencies on the power of remote guarding and review all dispatch outcomes emanating from Elite's monitoring center. By the numbers, Elite handles 96% of crime events in-house, with

the other 4% coordinating priority police.

Notably, the company has increased its in-house and police-assisted crime-prevention numbers in each of the past five years.
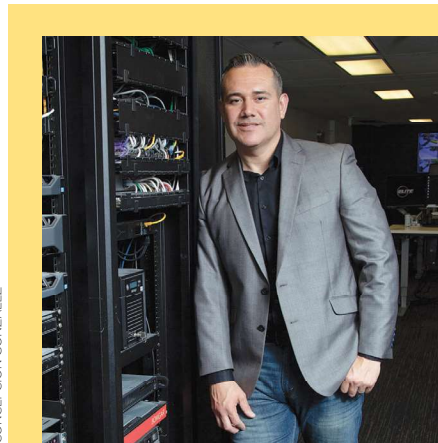
"Our agents are trained by former and current Los Angeles Police Department police dispatch supervisors and officers to ensure accuracy and concise PD calls for service," Goldfine says.

Complementing those law-enforcement partnerships is Elite's own in-house leadership team. Key executives include president and COO Michael Zatulov; CTO Jonathan Kozak; senior vice president of operations Rudy Aragon; SOCC security director Noel Delgado; sales vice president John Valdez; and vice president security solutions Scott Blakeman.

If you ask Goldfine, Elite's technology-driven business model underscores a potential paradigm shift, as evidenced by earning recognition as our 2024 Monitoring Technology Marvel Award recipient.

Still, Goldfine predicts further refinements, including the expanded use of AI and machine learning; increased efficiencies through deeper automation; more streamlined, integrated and unified technology stacks; implementation of more behavioral analytics; and unmanned aerial and ground vehicles being brought into the fold.

"These developments will allow providers like Elite to offer end customers ever more service and value," Goldfine concludes, "extending well into general business, management and operational benefits." SSI

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Elite Interactive Solutions' SOCC security director, Noel Delgado, oversees a fully secure, subterranean datacenter in downtown Los Angeles.