

Why Intelligent Audio Is The Industry's **Most Overlooked Advantage**



securityindustry.org

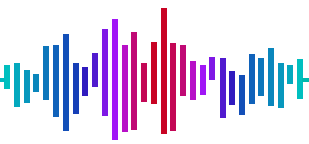
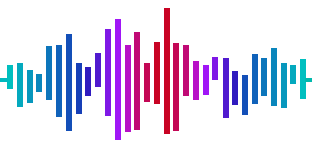


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Developed By SIA's Audio and Intelligent Communications Subcommittee

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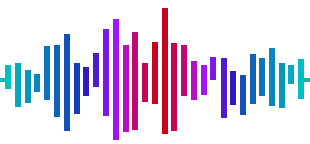


INTRODUCTION: THE UNHEARD-OF RISK

For decades, the security industry has focused on what it can see. Billions of dollars have been invested in high-resolution cameras, advanced video analytics and sophisticated access control systems. While these technologies have undoubtedly enhanced our ability to monitor and secure facilities, they have also created a significant, yet often overlooked, vulnerability: a silent gap in our security posture. We have become experts at observing events as they unfold, but we have largely ignored the critical sounds that precede, accompany and follow them. This reliance on visual-only security systems leaves organizations reactive, exposing them to increased risks, operational inefficiencies and significant financial and human costs.

This report, written in collaboration with the Security Industry Association (SIA) Audio and Intelligent Communications Subcommittee, explores the profound and often unquantified costs of this “sound of silence” in modern security programs. We will delve into the tangible and intangible losses incurred by not integrating intelligent audio into security strategies, from the missed opportunities to amplify existing technology investments to the far-reaching ramifications on employee safety, supply chain integrity and the very execution of business strategy. We will also present a new way of thinking about return on investment that every security leader and business executive should consider: the Risk of Inaction.

Through insights gathered from security program leaders, business counterparts, risk consultants, specifiers, integrators and manufacturers, we will make the case that intelligent audio is no longer a “nice-to-have” but rather an essential component of any comprehensive security strategy. It is time to break the silence and listen to what our security systems have been missing.



THE PROBLEM: A SILENT BLIND SPOT IN A VISUAL WORLD

Modern security programs are built on a foundation of visual information. We have become accustomed to seeing events unfold on video monitors, but this visual-centric approach has a fundamental limitation: it only shows what has already happened. By the time a physical altercation is visible on camera, it has already escalated. By the time a piece of machinery shows visible signs of malfunction, the damage may already be done. This reactive approach to security is no longer sufficient in today's complex and fast-paced world.

This silent blind spot is not just a technological gap—it is a significant business risk. It means that security teams are often the last to know about critical events, and their response is delayed, less effective and more costly. The consequences of this reactive posture are far-reaching, impacting everything from employee safety and morale to operational efficiency and brand reputation.

“Video by itself can alert security personnel to an emergency. But it’s audio that enables actions. Audio provides context to an incident. That context empowers users to communicate instructions and responses for safe outcomes.”

— Cameron Javdani, vice president, security solutions, AtlasIED

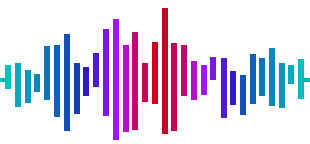
THE RISK OF INACTION: A NEW ROI FOR SECURITY

Traditionally, security investments have been justified based on their return on investment (ROI). While this is a valid and important metric, it often fails to capture the full value of security solutions, especially those that prevent incidents from happening in the first place. This is where the concept of the “Risk of Inaction” becomes a powerful tool for security leaders and business executives. As one industry publication aptly puts it, the risk of inaction “refers to playing it safe, by simply leaning on established strategies and not knowing or acting upon all opportunities for improvement. Choosing not to act can diminish a security team’s worth due to missed chances and open it up to safety risks.”⁴

When it comes to audio in security, the risk of inaction is substantial. By not integrating intelligent audio, organizations are not just missing out on a new technology—they are actively choosing to accept a higher level of risk. They are choosing to remain reactive, leave their employees more vulnerable and operate with a significant blind spot in their situational awareness.

“While designing and deploying a quality audio system is a learned skill or trained ability, there are many resources for security integrators to lean on to help reduce the learning curve and increase the effectiveness of a holistic security system. Holistic systems identify threats, mitigate risks and reduce loss for their clients while shrinking response times when urgent or critical events take place. Manufacturer training, design assistance and association education are just a few examples of outlets available to those who identify audio as a key business driver, but also a design weakness.”

— Gina Sansivero, vice president, marketing and corporate communications, AtlasIED



THE AMPLIFYING POWER OF AUDIO: MORE THAN JUST LISTENING

Intelligent audio is not just about listening; it is about understanding. It is about adding a new layer of context and intelligence to existing security investments, amplifying their effectiveness and unlocking new capabilities. When integrated with video surveillance, access control and other security systems, audio can transform a collection of disparate devices into a truly unified and proactive security solution.

Here are a few of the solutions that will enhance their value through the integration of audio:

Amplifying Video Surveillance

Video cameras can show you what is happening, but they cannot always tell you why. Audio provides the crucial context that is often missing from video footage. It can capture the sounds of aggression that precede a fight, the sound of breaking glass that indicates a break-in or the unusual noises from a piece of machinery that signal an impending failure. This additional layer of information allows security teams to respond more quickly and effectively, and it provides valuable evidence for investigations.

“Video surveillance is a vital element of any effective security system, yet it remains largely one-dimensional—for visual observation during live monitoring and post-event forensic analysis. Additional layers such as two-way audio, access control, intercom systems, body-worn cameras, strobes and more, creates a proactive and immersive security solution. This multi-dimensional approach enables real-time interaction, allowing security teams to communicate directly with individuals on-site,

issue warnings, verify identities and gather contextual audio cues that enhance situational awareness—creating a smarter, safer environment.”

—Chris Wildfoerster, program manager, IP audio, Axis Communications

Amplifying Access Control

Access control systems are designed to control who can enter a facility, but they are not always foolproof. Audio can add an extra layer of security to access control points by enabling two-way communication. This allows security personnel to verbally verify the identity of individuals requesting access, to challenge unauthorized individuals and to de-escalate potentially volatile situations from a safe distance.

“Audio adds a critical layer to access control, but its full value emerges when systems can analyze as well as respond. With artificial intelligence-driven conversational capabilities, access points evolve from passive checkpoints into active participants in safety, operations and the human experience.”

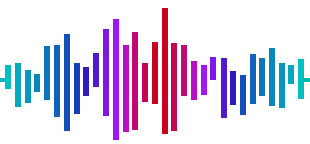
—Arturo Falck, CEO, Whoo.ai

Reducing False Alarms

False alarms are a major drain on security resources. They can lead to complacency or divert attention from real threats. Audio can help to significantly reduce false alarms by providing an additional layer of verification. When an alarm is triggered, security personnel can listen in to the live audio from the scene to determine whether it is a genuine threat or a false alarm. This saves time and money and ensures that security resources are focused on real incidents.

“As municipalities increasingly impose fines for unnecessary law enforcement dispatches, combining video surveillance with two-way audio enables security teams to verify incidents in real time, lowering false positives and improving overall operational efficiency. This has saved my large retail customers hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.”

—Terry Sutton, regional sales director, Hanwha Vision America



THE HUMAN COST: EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

The cost of not having audio in security programs is not just financial; it is also human. Workplace violence is a serious and growing problem, and it has a devastating impact on employees, their families, and the organizations they work for. According to the American Psychological Association, 90% of violent incidents are preceded by anger, which is often expressed through loud or aggressive speech [3]. By the time a physical altercation is visible on camera, it is often too late to intervene.

Intelligent audio analytics can detect the early warning signs of aggression, such as raised voices and agitated tones, and alert security personnel before a situation escalates. This proactive approach to workplace violence prevention can save lives, reduce injuries and create a safer and more secure working environment for everyone.

“Audio is a critical layer of modern security, and often the first line of defense in de-escalating

situations before they intensify. Whether through AI sound analytics that can detect the earliest signs of conflict, or two-way communication at your facility’s perimeter, audio helps protect everyone on both sides of your security system.”

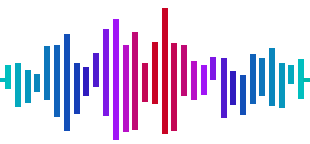
– **Spencer Himmelberger, senior product manager, Hanwha Vision America**

Beyond the immediate threat of violence, a lack of security can also have a significant impact on employee morale, productivity and retention. When employees do not feel safe at work, they are more likely to be stressed, anxious and disengaged. This can lead to higher rates of absenteeism, lower productivity and increased turnover. By investing in a comprehensive security program that includes intelligent audio, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to employee well-being and create a positive and productive work environment.

THE BUSINESS COST: OPERATIONAL INEFFICIENCIES AND SUPPLY CHAIN RISK

The costs of a security incident extend far beyond the immediate damage and loss. They can have a ripple effect throughout the entire organization, impacting everything from operational efficiency to supply chain integrity.





OPERATIONAL DOWNTIME

A security incident can bring business operations to a grinding halt. A fire, a flood or a violent incident can all lead to significant downtime, resulting in lost productivity, missed deadlines and decreased revenue. The faster an organization can respond to an incident, the faster it can resume normal operations. Audio can play a critical role in reducing response times by providing early warning of potential threats and by giving first responders the information they need to act quickly and decisively.

“In our business, every minute of downtime costs us thousands of dollars. Audio helps us to minimize downtime by enabling us to respond to incidents faster and more effectively.”

—Dan Rothrock, senior vice president, global business development, Zenitel

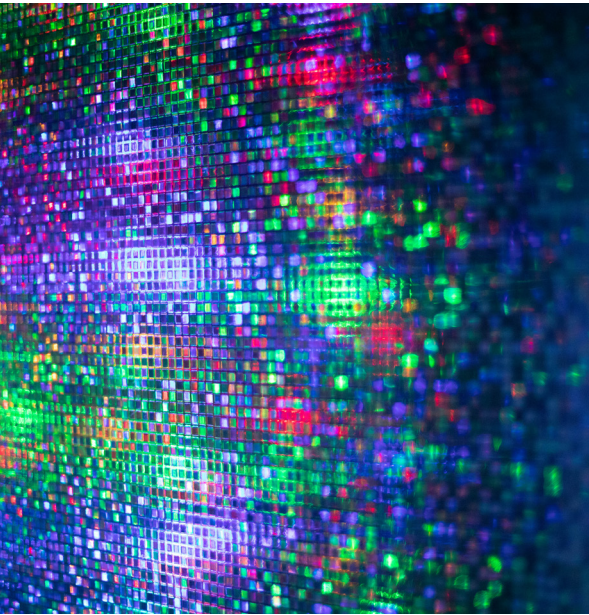
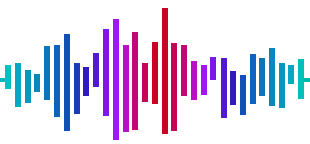
SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION

In today’s interconnected world, a security incident at one facility can have a cascading effect throughout the entire supply chain. A fire at a warehouse, a theft from a distribution center or a violent incident at a manufacturing plant can all disrupt the flow of goods and services, leading to delays, shortages, and increased costs. By providing early warning of potential threats, audio can help to prevent these disruptions and ensure the integrity of the supply chain.

“Integrating audio technology into your supply chain operations, whether at a warehouse, distribution site or logistics center, serves as a critical linchpin for maintaining consistency and efficiency. It significantly improves business operations by providing timely notifications, seamless communication and smoother coordination across your premises. By leveraging real-time audio analytics and integrations, issues can be identified more quickly and disruptions addressed before they become critical. For instance, in a bustling warehouse, audio sensors can detect unusual noises that may indicate equipment malfunctions or safety hazards, allowing for immediate corrective action. Additionally, proactive audio can alert management and security to potential issues related to staff and product safety, while voice-activated systems can streamline order picking processes, reducing errors and increasing efficiency. Together, these capabilities strengthen operational resilience and drive meaningful gains in productivity and, ultimately, customer satisfaction.”

—Joe Morgan, segment development manager, critical infrastructure, Axis Communications





THE PATH FORWARD: A CALL TO ACTION

The case for integrating intelligent audio into security programs is clear. The costs of not doing so are simply too high to ignore. But who is responsible for making this happen? The answer is that it is a shared responsibility, and it requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders in the security ecosystem.

The Role of the Security Industry Association

SIA has a critical role to play in promoting the adoption of intelligent audio. Through its Audio and Intelligent Communications Subcommittee, SIA can:

- Establish or confirm standards for audio quality, analytics and privacy
- Define interoperability requirements to ensure that audio systems can be seamlessly integrated with other security technologies
- Publish best practices and design guides to help organizations implement audio solutions effectively
- Educate end users on the benefits of intelligent audio and how to deploy it responsibly

The Role of Manufacturers

Manufacturers are at the forefront of innovation in the audio industry. They have a responsibility to:

- Develop high-quality, reliable and secure audio devices
- Create powerful and accurate audio analytics that can detect a wide range of threats
- Ensure that their products are easy to install, configure and use
- Work closely with other manufacturers to ensure that their products are interoperable.

The Role of Integrators

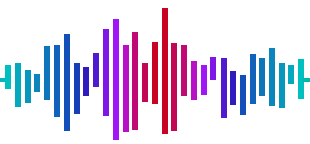
Integrators are the bridge between manufacturers and end users. They have a crucial role to play in:

- Educating their customers about the benefits of intelligent audio
- Designing and installing audio solutions that meet the specific needs of their customers
- Providing ongoing support and maintenance to ensure that audio systems are operating effectively

The Role of End Users

Ultimately, the decision to invest in intelligent audio rests with the end user. Security program leaders and their business counterparts need to:

- Recognize the limitations of their existing security systems
- Understand the risks of not having audio
- Make the business case for investing in intelligent audio
- Work with manufacturers and integrators to implement a solution that meets their needs



CONCLUSION: THE SOUND OF PROGRESS

The security industry is at a crossroads. We can continue to rely on the silent, visual-only security systems of the past, or we can embrace the future of security and integrate intelligent audio into our security strategies. The choice is clear—the cost of inaction is simply too high. By working together, we can break the silence and create a safer, more secure and more prosperous future for everyone.

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