

INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY FOR WORKPLACES OF THE FUTURE



By adding a second national control and command centre, Thorburn Security Solutions and its parent company, Tsebo Solutions Group, are bolstering its ability to provide cost-effective, quality solutions to clients.

There is an air of excitement at Thorburn Security Solutions' new offices in Midrand Johannesburg, as technicians, cleaners, movers and service staff add the finishing touches to the National Control and Command Centre (NCC) in time for its launch.

This second state-of-the-art NCC (the first being situated in the Western Cape) will add heft and efficiency to Thorburn's ability to offer a range of security and integrated facilities management solutions, in conjunction with Tsebo Solutions Group.

By centralising operations from the NCCs in Midrand and Cape Town, integrated facilities management solutions make use of the best available technology to provide onsite and offsite monitoring of premises as well as alarm monitoring, internet of things (IoT) monitoring, fleet management and more.

While the impetus to invest in technology to drive efficiencies through smart work solutions has been a pervasive theme for Thorburn for some time now, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed faster adoption by clients who have quickly come to realise the advantages. The most obvious in challenging economic times, is the additional cost savings it brings to businesses by creating a viable option to balance the need to reduce cost without compromising on quality or security.

"We've not only invested in physical technology, we've also invested in a business intelligence solution, called the Cyber Information Management System, which provides customers with a holistic view of their business and functions, and an overview of the steps they can take to survive and thrive in their market," says Ranesh Ranjith, Thorburn Sales and Marketing Director.

"Through this solution we partner with clients to map out processes, policies and procedures based on their key performance indicators (KPIs) and we write these protocols into a customer-specific dashboard to provide a visual understanding of the information that flows through their business."

"What this means from a protection point of view, is that we assess the risks and determine how we can mitigate these from the client's facilities. From an energy point of view, we look at how efficiently we can manage energy to eliminate waste and cut costs. We can remotely manage access of staff entering and exiting a building, we can also manage the use of lighting and air-conditioning. By helping our clients to manage their facilities better, we not only drive down costs, but also improve efficiencies and, most importantly, give them the assurance that we are 24/7 business and that they have our dedicated support."

Proactive protection beyond 'Security as Usual'

From a security perspective, Thorburn has invested considerable time and intellectual property into analysing the future of the security landscape, resulting in the development of a solutions-based model based on the core principles of:

- Detection, escalation and the management of exceptions as they happen
- Pro-active reporting
- Insight from information and reporting (predictive analysis dashboards)

The NCC and Cyber Information Intelligence Management System are key enablers that allow Thorburn to partner with clients to assess and mitigate risk as well as to implement proactive disaster recovery capabilities.

Informing workplaces of the future

By tapping into 50 years of accumulated experience and expertise across the Tsebo Solutions Group, the NCC is also being mobilised to form workplaces of the future. This is being done by addressing the changing nature of work and creating scalable, flexible security and facilities management solutions that can be customised and redesigned around a client's specific needs.



INTELLIGENT PROTECTION

For one, COVID-19 has heightened awareness around the need for increased cleanliness, hygiene and infection control, particularly in shared workspaces.

“From a workplace readiness perspective, there are a number of ways in which we are able to assist our clients through remote management and monitoring,” says Ranjith. “Number one, is to understand how employees are adapting to their new working environments and how comfortable they feel about returning to their physical workspaces.”

To this end, facial recognition devices can be used not only for contactless access control, but also as fever-screening devices. They can also be programmed to conduct surveys to gauge employee’s confidence in the safety measures that are in place, to mention an example.

“The NCC, together with the Cyber Information Management System, can be used to monitor and manage social distancing and to provide information to our clients around how employees move around the workplace. This, together with extensive research we are conducting into international trends on workplace optimisation, can enhance workplace planning and spatial design to create safer working environments,” says Ranjith.

In addition, the NCC can monitor high touchpoint areas to advise the Tsebo Cleaning and Hygiene division on how they can improve their service by using specialised cleaning and disinfection methodologies in specific areas.

Vacant property solutions

An area that has seen considerable growth for Thorburn is its Vacant Property Solutions. With the nationwide lockdown resulting in businesses mothballing parts of their operations or closing down completely, there has been a rise in vacant properties. In response to a new demand from clients, Thorburn tailored specialised vacant property resolutions, which make use of the NCC to monitor properties and protect them against security-related issues, such as vandalism, theft, and vagrancy as well as maintenance issues, such as water leaks, fire detection, and electrical consumption among others.

Technology to enhance people power

An aspect that Ranjith is quick to point out is that the role of technology is not to replace people, but rather to enhance their abilities to do their jobs well, by improving efficiency and enhancing their safety and security. “When a client gives us the go-ahead to conduct a risk assessment, for example, the first risk we assess is whether it’s safe for us to deploy personnel to perform their function onsite. If it isn’t, we employ the relevant technology to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of employees.”

“In high-risk scenarios like mines, for example, we can dispatch a drone to move through an area and send photographs back to the NCC where our highly trained controllers use this information to advise on any irregularities, as well as on how to safely deploy the correct teams to deal with a situation or emergency. So, what we’re actually doing is creating layers of protection between the situation onsite and our officers and technicians to prevent potential harm or danger.”

One partner for integrated workplace management

All of the above plays into Tsebo’s strategy to be a single point of contact for all integrated workplace management solutions – from cleaning and hygiene, to catering, security and engineering, workplace floorplan optimisation and ergonomic design, among others. These customisable solutions come with advanced integrated reporting that provides a comprehensive and transparent overview of services, as well as the assurance that Tsebo is an accredited compliance partner and Level 1 BEE contributor.

“Thorburn, together with Tsebo is a flexible, national operation that strives to partner with clients by offering a comprehensive basket of personalised and streamlined services,” says Ranjith. “The big benefit for customers is the intelligence that we offer when considering how to improve their business model, for example, from a cost and efficiency point of view, from a risk point of view, and by helping them to adapt for the future.”