

Bulldog builds through diversity and adapting to changing market

Kitchener-Waterloo-based integrator preparing for further expansion.

A small town integrator has emerged as a major player in the security market, thanks to its diverse approach. Bulldog Fire & Security was created to fill in the gap left by many local fire and security companies that merged with their larger American counterparts — to provide an alternative to the multinationals and offer localized service.

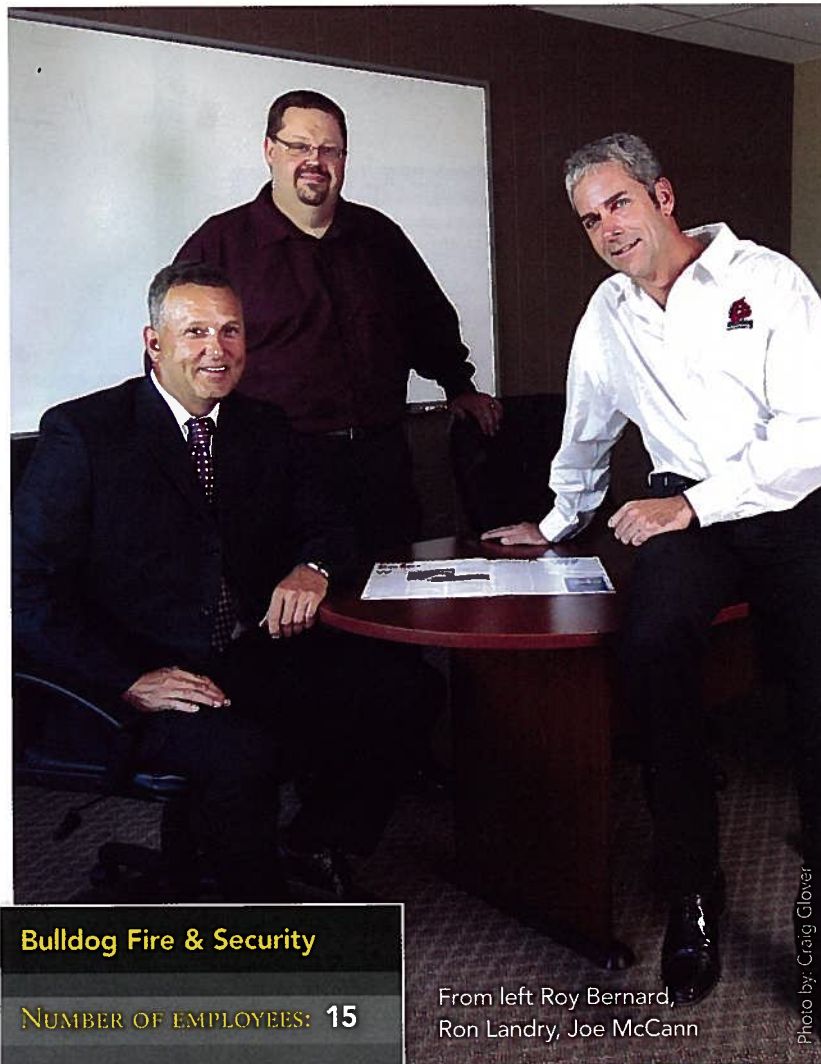
Founders Ron Landry, a security subcontractor, and Roy Bernard, who ran a fire alarm company in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, combined their expertise to form Bulldog Fire & Security, an integrator with one of the most recognizable brands in the business.

They got a big break with their first client: Research in Motion, and business hasn't slowed down since. They now tackle everything from intrusion alarm, card access and video surveillance systems for corporations, institutions and residential properties.

Back in 2000, when Landry and Bernard started the company, there weren't a lot of integrators in Kitchener-Waterloo that were capable of handling large commercial installations — typically that would fall to multinationals, such as Honeywell. That's where Bulldog came into the picture: to provide the scale of a larger company, with a local approach.

"We were surprised how quickly it caught on," says Scott Bean, who handles residential sales with Bulldog. "We weren't charging what the multinationals were charging and yet we were able to perform the installations [customers] were looking for." At that time, Bulldog was mostly doing card access and standard security systems, but the integrator continued to evolve — mostly through diversity. "Ron and Roy didn't say no to anything," he said. Before they knew it, they were providing everything from network wiring to IP cameras.

A lot of that had to do with RIM. "It forced us as a company to be thinking ahead and going with the most recent technology," says Joe McCann, who handles building development and



From left Roy Bernard, Ron Landry, Joe McCann

Photo by: Craig Glover

Bulldog Fire & Security

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 15

HOW LONG IN THE BUSINESS: January 2000

AREAS OF OPERATION: Based in Kitchener-Waterloo. Serves Ontario directly; works through dealer network across Canada and abroad.

AREAS SERVED: Access control, security, video and fire

system design with Bulldog. The integrator sold its first IP camera two years ago. Now, it does everything from security to video to fire to monitoring. Fire, in particular, has opened up new doors. "We got into Sleeman [Breweries] because we're ULC listed," he says. Now it's working with the

from Kitchener, but they are because we can offer these solutions," says Bean. And it's doing so with non-proprietary equipment. Even its monitoring contracts don't lock customers in; they're allowed to get out at any point they choose — and that approach has led a low attrition rate.

"We know that expansion is going to happen, and it may or may not be through acquisitions," says Bean. "It may be on our own or purchasing another company in that direction." It's also discussing the eventual possibility of running its own monitoring station, since there aren't any in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Through RIM, Bulldog has gained experience on sites around the world, working through its dealer network. As it continues to extend its reach across Canada, it's working with dealers from Vancouver to the Atlantic provinces.

Between education, health care and major corporations, Bulldog is keeping busy — even though most of its business is through word of mouth. School security, for example, has become a hot topic in the past few years. Niagara District Catholic School Board in Welland, Ont. is one customer — made up of 70 schools over a wide geographical area — that turned to Bulldog to secure its students and facilities.

Bulldog integrated the Keyscan access control system with an IP camera and intercom system so teachers and secretaries would have the ability to see and speak with anyone trying to enter one of the schools. Security professionals monitor the account 24 hours a day through a ULC approved monitoring station. "Now school boards are coming to us because they recognize the value-add," said McCann, which includes fire and security, as well as monitoring.

Over the past five years, Bulldog has been growing at a rate of 355 per cent per year, and it's on target to maintain that this year. "We get offers to be bought a couple times a week, but we're in it for the long haul and we're not for sale," says McCann.

Vawn Himmelsbach is a Toronto-based freelance writer. ■

brewery to upgrade its existing proprietary security system.

Four years ago Bulldog's business was 60 per cent access control, 20 per cent security, 15 per cent video and the rest fire, but that asset mix is always changing — now there's less access control and more video, because that's where the market is heading. And the integrator is seeing big demand for IP cameras. "We're constantly reinventing ourselves," says McCann. "We can't think too far ahead."

Bulldog got its start in Kitchener-Waterloo, but now does business all over Ontario, and it's looking to open offices in northern Toronto and the Niagara region. "We've been asked to go outside of our local area and now we're dealing with customers that typically wouldn't deal with somebody