



Security firm thrives by using latest technology

By Tina-Marie O'Neill

Emmet O'Rafferty

Company: Top Security:

Position: chief executive

Location: Dublin, Cork and Johannesburg

In an increasingly uncertain world, the need for greater security has become paramount. This is good news for Emmet O'Rafferty, the principal behind the Top Security Group, one of the country's leading firms in the field.

A native of Dublin, O'Rafferty was raised in Canada and attended Castleknock College, Dublin. He said he pursued a number of "Mickey Mouse jobs" before joining Berger Paints.

"Berger was setting up its customer services department at the time," O'Rafferty said.

"I worked for a lot of good people, in what was a great learning curve."

He eventually left as marketing manager to set up his own venture. However, the venture failed, forcing O'Rafferty back into sales work.

"Going door to door, I met people in the security business," he said. "I got to know and understand the business, and saw an opportunity to set up on my own."

O'Rafferty set up Top Security in 1979. The company's clients include state and semi-state bodies, large corporations, property companies and multinationals.

"Top Security is divided into three sectors across the group," O'Rafferty said. "The security services aspect includes communication services such as monitoring and the physical aspect of man guarding."

"The second arm – systems installations, includes alarms, CCTV and access control systems. That area is now being augmented by biometrics."

Biometric techniques include recognition through eye and fingerprint scans, hand geometry and facial features.

The third pillar of the company focuses on the IT security sector. Top Security recently bought Systemhouse Technology Group in a deal worth over €7 million to strengthen its position in the sector.

Systemhouse provides corporate anti-virus solutions and IT security systems to many government, semi-state and private sector bodies. "Rather than waiting for people to take us over, we decided to grow and expand the business in the early 1990s," O'Rafferty said.

Along with its headquarters in Dublin, Top Security has of-

fices in Cork and Johannesburg.

While on holiday in South Africa in 1994, O'Rafferty realised a number of opportunities were open to him. Nelson Mandela was about to take over as the country's president. Big security companies were waiting to see how smoothly the transition would take place. O'Rafferty saw an opportunity to establish his firm in the local marketplace, and with successful results – the company now employs 2,000 people in South Africa.

"Our long-term ambition is to be active in a third market, but for now we're focusing on our business in Ireland and South Africa, where there is work yet to do," he said.



Emmet O'Rafferty, Top Security Group