

# **ÆGIS**



## ***Addressing threats that affect your bottom line***

Volume 9 Number 1, January 2006

From the case files of

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<http://www.lubrinco.com/>

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## **1. Asset Location and Due Diligence — Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a reflection of management policy, and is an important issue: happy customers tend to be the best and least expensive tool for generating new customers; unhappy customers tend to actively try to get people they know to use other companies. We have recently encountered a number of situations in which people with whom we deal have had needlessly bad experiences with companies.

As an example, one user of satellite phones had his pre-paid card expired (the minutes needed to be used up by a certain date) while in the field. While there was \$900 left on the card when it expired, the assignment had two days remaining. He called customer care and asked what he could do to get the minutes extended, and was told he would have to spend a fairly substantial amount to re-fill the card. While not questioning that the card had expired, or that the company had the prerogative of cutting it off when it expired, the user is now selling the phone, and will cheerfully bad-mouth the company to any potential users whom he encounters. The good news is that while customer care didn't care, the corporate communications people recognize that this was a bad business decision, so we will not mention their name here, on the assumption that they will do the right thing and get some policy put in place to deal with this edge condition.

In another case, a woman went into an Associated supermarket here in New York and bought some milk which turned out to be spoiled. She brought it back to exchange, and was told that the store didn't carry that brand and, receipt for milk or not, they wouldn't exchange it. As you might imagine, neither she, nor anyone she knows, will use that chain.

In another case, we ourselves bought an Archos MP3 player from Gateway (the computer folk). It died shortly after purchase, and Gateway customer care said that they merely sold them and took no responsibility for the device. They told us that we would have to speak with Archos. Some 150 or so calls and e-mails later with Archos (and Gateway) we gave up. We have subsequently convinced dozens of people not to buy Gateway products, and have steered many people away from Archos.

You may contrast this with a recent problem we had with a Leviton light switch. After being informed of the problem by e-mail, we got a phone call from Dan Reiter, a customer service supervisor, to say that they were sending us a replacement, and asking us to send back the defective unit so their quality assurance people could figure out what went wrong.

But is the tone of customer care really set by senior management? We recall working for Simmons Bedding Company, the folks that make the Beautyrest® mattress, many years ago. At that time, Grant Simmons and his senior managers would meet once a week to review all letters of complaint that had been received and decide how they should be handled. They also reviewed the actual disposition of cases from the week before. Their goal was to have satisfied customers. We would guess that the development of their previous and current code of ethics (<http://www.simmons.com/investors/codeOfEthicsPrev.cfm>) was fairly easy: They merely codified their everyday behavior.

In the same way, ventures that give benefit to others while bringing no obvious benefit to the venture are often still a good idea. An example of this would be the free tango lessons offered by the Argentine Consulate in New York City at lunchtime two days a week. The Consulate has the expense associated with providing the facility, plus the annoyance of a bunch of gringos streaming in twice a week to dance.

The benefit to the students is fairly high in two areas. First, the two teachers, Alicia Cruzado and Fran Chesleigh, are excellent teachers at the top of their game. Second, because the classes are free, the teachers have the luxury of teaching what they think is important for social dancing, rather than a series of performance techniques designed to get the students of a school to sign up for more paying classes.

The only downside for the students is the hour: While some people zip in a little late, take class for a while on their lunch break and then leave early, the class is largely accessible only to those folks who can free up their time between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm.

Is there a benefit for the Consulate other than vague good will? Well, a significant number of the students who study at the Consulate end up going on trips to Buenos Aires to dance, and we would bet that the tourist dollars generated far outstrip any costs.

And the benefit to the teachers? We have no idea what their deal with the Consulate might be. Interestingly, the classes are *not* used by the teachers as a springboard to get private students, or to get students for classes they teach elsewhere, which might be one's first assumption. Indeed, they recommend a wide variety of *practicas*, *milongas*, and workshops done by others.

In the end, the offering of free classes benefits all parties directly involved, and Argentina's balance of trade, as well as the tango community in general.

## **2. OPSEC, Economic Espionage, and Competitive Intelligence — Camera phones at the movies, and their recommended use on TV**

We recently went to see a movie (*The Family Stone*, which we quite enjoyed). Before entering the theatre itself we were all asked if we had mobile phones. For those who said yes, the devices were visually checked, and camera phones were taken away, to be held until the patron left the theatre. This is part of a continuing trend, which we have discussed in the past, of an increasing number of places that will not allow camera phones on their premises.

The list of places where camera phones are banned, or where they are vouchered, includes some movie theatres, health clubs, restaurants, schools, government facilities, and businesses. Indeed, we know of one mobile phone service provider that had an incident in their facility, and was considering a policy that would prohibit the camera phones they sell to their customers from being brought into their facilities.

Interestingly, one manufacturer of camera phones has turned this to their advantage, and has a television ad in which they show a young man rapidly advancing his career by taking compromising videos (yes, some cameras take videos as well as photos) at company events. Since blackmail and extortion have generally been frowned-upon by society at large, it is an interesting sign of the times that a company would consider advertising their mobile phones as being an appropriate tool for blackmail or extortion.

## **3. Executive Protection — Nutritional supplements while traveling**

Traveling can be stressful under the best of circumstances. It can disrupt sleep patterns, move you quickly from time zone to time zone, subject you to environmental changes and stressors, expose you to a wide variety of new germs, reduce your opportunity for exercise, separate you from your accustomed environment, and change the way you eat.

These stressors can have an adverse effect on your health, which means you must be especially careful when you travel. Under the best of circumstances, many of us benefit from taking nutritional supplements. There are two reasons for this. First, many of us eat poor or unbalanced diets, leaving us nutritionally lacking. Secondly, many of us eat food that comes from places that have been over-farmed, so that the soil has become depleted, which means that the food produced there is not as beneficial as it was a century or two ago.

The bottom line is that many of us should be considering taking nutritional supplements of some sort. But what sort? We have recently read literature that makes a convincing case that supplements taken as compressed pills tend not to be absorbed as well as powdered or liquid supplements.

The literature seems sufficiently convincing to us that we have switched from our former regimen of pills to taking a capful of liquid vitamins. At the recommendation of several friends who have some expertise in this area, we are at present taking Natures Plus Liquid Source of Life (<http://www.naturesplus.com/products/productDetail.asp?productNumber=30601>).

We are also taking, at their recommendation, other supplements they feel appropriate for us, and have added liquid minerals on our own. Since we do not feel particularly well qualified to act as nutritional counselors, we will stick to the conservative recommendation that you consider liquid vitamins as part of your health plan. And investigate other liquid supplements as you feel appropriate to your needs.

#### **4. Technical Issues — Maritime Shipping in the 21st Century: The Next Generation**

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Today the U.S. faces some serious transport and logistical problems. There is a growing problem of supplying troops with equipment and materiel at “hot spots” around the world. With the increase of hurricanes hitting the Florida and Gulf Coast Regions, we have found it difficult to provide water, food, and medical supplies when roads and bridges are damaged or destroyed. We face the threat of terrorists who are trying to disrupt international shipping lanes by attacking commercial tankers and military vessels. Add to this the concerns of the oil industry about environmental catastrophes created when large or super size tankers are damaged accidentally or intentionally. Is there any one possible answer to all of these concerns?

The SeaSnake is a new shipping system that can revolutionize current maritime transport. It has applications for the commercial market, the military, FEMA, and homeland security. This shipping system, created by Carlos Kountz, a mechanical engineer, has multiple registered patents including those for a unique bumper and locking system. This enables the SeaSnake to connect and disconnect barges in open water. This shipping system combines the best qualities of tankers and barges and adds many qualities unique to it self. It is more efficient, versatile and environmentally friendly than any ocean

transport system operating today. Unlike a tanker, the SeaSnake's lower draft allows the ship to move along the coastline and into many river systems. Additionally, it is capable of going through the two major canals eliminating the need of making the long trip around the horn of Africa or South America cutting days and dollars off a trip. Unlike a barge which is not ocean worthy, this ship is capable of traveling in the open ocean.

The SeaSnake consists of a mother ship, a number of barges, and a caboose. Because the barges easily disconnect, they can be used in a "drop and swap" format. A full barge with its cargo can be dropped off and an empty one can be picked up. This will minimize the time a ship and its crew must sit around waiting while unloading or loading occurs. Also, since many harbors have limited access and often get tied up with ships waiting to enter, the SeaSnake barges can be disconnected and brought in singly without waiting. This could save time and big money. The mother ship and caboose both contain tugs which can be dropped into the water and used to move full barges into ports and pick up empties. Even the caboose is capable of disconnecting and moving barges under its own power. Also, the barges can be dropped off and function as temporary storage facilities.

Originally intended to help in the shipment of oil, it soon became apparent that the SeaSnake could transport almost any liquid or dry bulk product. Because the oil would be divided into many separate barge compartments, damage to one would prevent leaks to the others and would minimize the environmental impact. We have seen in the case of the Exxon Valdez, which leaked oil up in Alaska, what could happen when a tanker hull is compromised. Environmental catastrophes are one of the biggest concerns of major oil companies, and by transporting oil in the SeaSnake's smaller barges, the chance of a major catastrophe is significantly reduced.

### ***Naval and Military Applications***

The versatility and flexibility of the SeaSnake can provide the military with an abundance of benefits. With the possibility of military threats that can pop up anywhere in the world, the U.S. Military can not always count on friendly ports and storage facilities. SeaSnake barges can be secluded and anchored in "safe" areas ready to supply naval ships or field units with fuel, water, or supplies. If the military only plans on being in area for a short time, where it would be unnecessary to build permanent and costly storage facilities, the barges can serve as temporary storage facilities for fuel and supplies, making permanent facilities unnecessary. The U.S.S. Cole was seriously damaged going into a "friendly" port in the Middle East. The repair was both timely

and costly. The SeaSnake can meet and re-supply ships at sea which not only ensures their safety but saves time in getting to a troubled spot. A method of hooking up and refueling and re-supplying ships at sea has already been planned by the SeaSnake creator.

For the army, barges can be designed to move all types of military vehicles. Using the “drop and swap” method, full barges can be dropped off and empty barges removed at the same time. Once again, if necessary, barges could be used as temporary storage facilities for any expeditionary force.

### ***FEMA, Coast Guard & Homeland Security Applications***

FEMA and Homeland Security are designed to activate during any natural or unnatural disaster i.e. hurricane, earthquake or acts of terrorism. The SeaSnake would be invaluable. Recently we have seen major worldwide disasters ranging from tsunamis to hurricanes. While serious loss of life was due to the event itself, an even greater problem arises in trying to provide victims with water, food and medical supplies. Prior to these events supplies can not be stored locally because they too would be lost in the storm. Often roads and bridges are either damaged or destroyed making it difficult or impossible to bring in supplies by land. Enter the SeaSnake. Hurricanes often provide days of warning. SeaSnakes could be loaded and kept out of harm's way and brought into the area after the hurricane passes. Because a lot of hurricane damage is along the coast, the SeaSnake can be brought in close to the coastline with water, food and medical supplies. The SeaSnake mother-ship supports a helicopter pad which could load helicopters which in turn could drop ship supplies to isolated areas. Also, supplies can be transferred to smaller boats which can in turn drop them off to isolated locations. Florida, including the entire Gulf Coast Region, could be covered by a fleet of these ships.

### ***Dealing with Terrorism on the High Seas***

Terrorists believe that interrupting the flow of oil and commerce by blocking narrow passages i.e. Suez and Panama Canal, the Strait of Gibraltar etc. could cause Western economies to collapse. Plans by terrorists to attack international maritime shipping targets, both commercial and military, have already been discovered. Terrorist attempts to bomb both U.S. and British ships in Gibraltar were foiled in 2002. However they have been successful in other places. Sinking a large tanker in a strait or canal could disrupt international shipping for quite some time, not to mention the environmental impact of a leak. The SeaSnake, however, divides its cargo into separate barges, the chances of a major environmental catastrophe are limited. Plus,

removing a smaller barge unit would speed up the time it would take to clear the passageway minimizing disruptions to international shipping.

Additionally, damaging a medium or super tanker will take them out of service for substantial periods of time to repair (not to mention the cost). They are not easily put back in service or replaced. Overall there is not a worldwide abundance of tankers. Most shipping companies are currently working at full capacity. So even damaging a ship could upset international trade. Because the SeaSnake barges can be produced in smaller shipyards, more economically and replaced quickly, the disruption can be minimized. In fact, extra barges can be kept on hand to easily replace those damaged for any reason.

Military targets are also a high priority for terrorists. The U.S.S. Cole was seriously damaged by a terrorist attack after entering a “friendly” port. Supplying naval ships at sea would eliminate the need for these ships to enter vulnerable ports for supplies. Furthermore, it would reduce the time it takes these ships to get to their destinations.

### ***SeaSnake Developments***

The SeaSnake has gone through rigorous and successful tank testing at the University of Michigan. It has received positive evaluations from the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) and naval architects. In addition, we have been receiving some excellent comments from experts who have reviewed our material. Here is a quote from a naval architect at the Coast Guard, “I’ve seen a lot of wild ideas after 24 years in naval arch R&D, but your concept makes a good deal of sense. You’ve got a streamlined hull form and your own private tug for docking.” Another Coast Guard naval architect said “It is a wonderful concept and ship.”

Evolution favored the survival of those animals that were able to adapt over time. Those that didn’t change to meet the changing conditions of the times disappeared. Evolution in shipping will allow us to move safely and efficiently forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

For more information:

<http://www.SeaSnake.net/>

or contact:

Mr. John Marcley, General Partner

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1-631-273-6808

## 5. Real Stories from the Field — Santa Claus

Those of you who watch the Simpsons might recall the episode in which Homer dies, but can't get into Heaven because he has never done a good deed. He is sent back, and, quite by accident, does a good deed. He goes back to Heaven, but God says He wasn't looking and didn't see it. Homer says "I thought you see everything." God replies "I believe you have me confused with Santa Claus." While we have some question about the theological soundness of the Simpsons, more and more of what we do *is* observed.

Worldwide, Echelon and Carnivore can capture a significant portion of unencrypted communications worldwide. And it has become clear that eavesdropping on telephone calls and electronic communications is being done by the government in the U.S. While the NSA is required by law to go to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court for permission to eavesdrop on American soil, in practice this has been bypassed, with wiretaps being performed domestically and without court orders. And while Admiral Poindexter's Total Information Awareness (T.I.A.) data mining program was shut down, a 2004 General Accounting Office report noted that 52 federal agencies had 131 data mining operations going, with an additional 68 planned.

The stated justification for all this activity is that we need to fight terrorism, and that the pesky Fourth Amendment constrains us in this vital endeavor. The administration's position is that the 14 September 2001 Congressional joint use-of-force resolution allowing the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force" to combat terrorism authorizes him to do anything he chooses, domestically and abroad, including warrantless wiretaps, and suspension of *habeas corpus*.

It is quite predictable that in time of stress presidents from Lincoln through Bush have believed that civil liberties are a constraint that must be bypassed to prevent a threat to the American way of life (i.e., civil liberties). In general, whether fighting secessionism, Communism, terrorism, gangsterism, or almost any of the other isms that have threatened us, the knee-jerk response to those who question violations of civil liberties in the face of very-real problems have been:

- A) You are unpatriotic and supporting the threat *du jour*.
- B) If you had nothing to hide you wouldn't object.

Putting aside the invariable misuse of power when it is not constrained by oversight and transparency, it is important to remember that laws are enforced based on their content, not their intent. Thus, for example, the RICO

(Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) Act was designed to fight the Mafia, yet is most widely used in civil prosecutions. And that while the USA Patriot (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act was nominally intended to fight terrorism, prosecutions are largely not related to terrorism. Thus, since the Congressional resolution was so lacking in constraints, it is reasonable to expect that the executive branch will freely use the power it has been given, until it is restrained by the legislative and judicial branches. The whole point of our system of checks and balances is, after all, to constrain the use of power before it harms the country too much.

But it is not just monitoring of communications that allows Santa to keep his list of who is good and who is bad. Someone we know recently got a letter saying that EZPASS (the device that allows you to go through a special lane on the highway and have tolls billed to your account, rather than stopping to pay) had marked his going through the toll booth at 35 mph, and that if it happened again his account would be cancelled. We are given to understand that people have received tickets for speeding based on EZPASS tollbooth times. This is not dissimilar to the way people receive tickets for running red lights, based on cameras designed for just that purpose.

And cameras are everywhere. London, England, for example, has an estimated 150,000 public cameras, and the average citizen is caught on camera 500 times a day. England itself has about 2.5 million cameras. While crime rates have gone up in England, use of these surveillance systems has received wide support from camera manufacturers. Other cities – Washington, D.C. springs to mind – have followed London’s example with equal enthusiasm.

Other cities haven’t automated things yet, but habitually photograph members of suspected criminal groups, and keep dossiers of them. The Denver police, for example, had dossiers of members of “criminal extremist” groups such as the Quakers.

Sometimes these sorts of things are done in a non-intrusive manner. In New York City, for example, random searching of passengers entering the transit system was put in place. We ourselves never saw anyone searched, but if you didn’t want to be searched you had the option of declining and leaving, presumably coming in, unsearched, via another entrance. Some have said that the goal of this policy was twofold. First, it was an election year, and thus security theatre was important. Second, that the City administration believed the ACLU would take them to court, where the procedure would be

forbidden. Then, if any incident took place in the subway, it could be said that they could have stopped it had not the ACLU prevented them.

Lest you think that governments are the only invaders of your privacy, if you play CDs on your computer you need to check whether you have played any of the Sony-BMG CDs<sup>1</sup> that automatically installed malware on Windows machines (we ourselves have Autorun turned off on our Windows computers, so the program should not have started even if we loaded a Sony malware CD). Among other things, the Sony-BMG rootkit, which makes itself invisible, opens your computer to attacks by others. There was a furor over this when discovered, and Sony-BMG made available a remover (which didn't actually work). Now the CDs ask if they can install a program called MediaMax. If you say no, it will de-activate when you reboot, and remain inactive until you play another infected CD, at which point it will install itself permanently. Not buying any Sony-BMG CDs avoided the problem. More information on this can be found by doing a search for "sony malware", or at [http://www.boingboing.net/2005/11/28/sony\\_cd\\_spyware\\_inst.html](http://www.boingboing.net/2005/11/28/sony_cd_spyware_inst.html), and <http://www.sysinternals.com/blog/2005/10/sony-rootkits-and-digital-rights.html>, to pick one non-technical and one technical article at random.

All of this brings us back, as always happens with any discussion of public policy, to the five questions, adopted from Bruce Schneier, that should be asked of any policy or measure:

1. What problem is the policy or measure trying to solve?
2. How can it fail in practice?
3. Given the failure modes, how well does it solve the problem?
4. What are the costs, both financial and social, associated with it, and flowing from its unintended consequences?
5. Given the effectiveness and costs, is the policy or measure worth it?

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<sup>1</sup> The list supposedly included Trey Anastasio, Shine (Columbia), Celine Dion, On ne Change Pas (Epic), Neil Diamond, 12 Songs (Columbia), Our Lady Peace, Healthy in Paranoid Times (Columbia), Chris Botti, To Love Again (Columbia), Van Zant, Get Right with the Man (Columbia), Switchfoot, Nothing is Sound (Columbia), The Coral, The Invisible Invasion (Columbia), Acceptance, Phantoms (Columbia), Susie Suh, Susie Suh (Epic), Amerie, Touch (Columbia), Life of Agony, Broken Valley (Epic), Horace Silver Quintet, Silver's Blue (Epic Legacy), Gerry Mulligan, Jeru (Columbia Legacy), Dexter Gordon, Manhattan Symphonie (Columbia Legacy), The Bad Plus, Suspicious Activity (Columbia), The Dead 60s, The Dead 60s (Epic), Dion, The Essential Dion (Columbia Legacy), Natasha Bedingfield, Unwritten (Epic), Ricky Martin, Life (Columbia).

## 6. Book and Product Reviews

*AquaStar™ Plus* water purifier  
Meridion Design, Inc. \$95  
<http://www.uvaquastar.com/>



In last month's *ÆGIS* we mentioned the AquaStar Plus water purifier. This month we would like to discuss it further, albeit in another, more generally useful, context.

While some may use a water purifier when camping (either by choice, or, worst case, when a disaster forces you to be camping), our personal concerns about water occur much more often when we are traveling. Whether it is in a hotel in Mexico or Turkey, or a public fountain in Egypt, there is always a question as to whether or not the flora and fauna in the local water will do bad things to you. While we have never actually been killed by local water, we have in the past gotten cholera, as well as experiencing less life threatening problems. All things considered, this range of loss of electrolytic fluids – not to mention other, even worse, possibilities – is something we would prefer to avoid in the future.

While one can, of course, stick to bottled water, there is always some question as to whether the water that is in the bottle was put there in the restaurant's kitchen, or is the real stuff. And while your hotel insists its water is perfectly safe, is it? The AquaStar eliminates concern. You simply fill the bottle, push the button, and in 80 seconds you have a liter of water in which nothing – not bacteria, not cysts, and not viruses – is alive.

A pair of CR123 batteries is good for 16 gallons, which should cover even the thirstiest of us on a business trip or vacation. In addition, the company offers an external power adapter which can be either plugged in to a 110/220 power source or connected to a cigar lighter power source.

If you travel, the AquaStar Plus is a good item to have in your suitcase.

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