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ATTRACTING THE WORST KIND OF PREDATOR

On a cyber-hunt to
stop crooks and creeps

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Family Business Issue: Sibling Rivalry, Cain and Abel and Building One



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ATTRACTING THE WORST KIND OF PREDATOR

Magnet Forensics is on the cyber-hunt for clues
to stop crooks and creeps

BY JON ROHR



Jad Saliba and Adam Belsher

Owners and entrepreneurs understand that rare energy experience when passion produces profit, stimulates growth and attracts talent. It takes a particular kind of entrepreneur, the kind movies are made about.

Jad Saliba, ex-Waterloo Region Police officer, cancer survivor, computer geek, passionate guardian of civil society and founder of JADsoftware is that kind of entrepreneur.

In 2006, Officer Saliba was the family bread winner, father to three adorable children and a dedicated husband to a beautiful wife. In 2007, life slammed Saliba into a tailspin. He was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 26; through the next year he went through the ups and downs of chemotherapy. His dream of police work, raising a family, and watching his kids grow, was in jeopardy.

But throughout his ordeal, he maintained his dream of fighting bad guys. And at the end of his cancer therapy, Saliba was provided an opportunity that would change his life forever.

Saliba had computer skills, and a pretty good understanding of programs and programming. Prior to the police force he did some time at Opentext, a Waterloo world-renowned technology company.

It's been said that more than 33% of all the world's internet traffic flows through heavily secured servers, that far more secure data flows than the general population's surfing and searching data.

Leveraging his skills, the Waterloo Regional Police Force had the perfect position for him. It was low stress, technically based and would utilize Saliba's knowledge of programing. He was placed in the Technological Crime Unit.

In 2002, the Waterloo Regional Police Service recognized the need to create a specific, structure method to counter cybercrimes; that led to the establishment of a Technological Crimes Unit. Here, specially trained investigators deal specifically with all types of computer related offenses. And they must be savvy, for as frequently as innovators innovate, the police have to keep pace. In most cases, they are searching for trails of content, which need to be found, catalogued and determined to be evidence or not. Saliba's duties included the bringing together of all of the technical evidence available to satisfy an investigation. Whether

they were child luring cases, homicides, or fraud, the content could be found as messages either on Facebook or other cloud based or home based software. Saliba was suddenly back in the middle of fighting crime, and living a scenario that is now the basis for several prime time television shows.

Saliba worked tirelessly in his new post; he became passionate about searching and finding evidence relevant to each case. As time went on, he wondered if there was even more evidence out there. He wondered what was left on the suspect's hard drive. He asked questions like "Was there information left after the window was closed or program deleted?" Saliba became very passionate about improving his process, to the extent that that he would spend countless hours after work, at home, working on new solutions that would assist his work during the day.

Saliba found traces of programs in a device's memory that could be organized. He discovered you could see the entire message left on the device's memory or fragmented in traces scattered over different parts of the hard drive. They were linked, as each message had a common signature or recognizable and repeated series of binary code, the zeros and ones that all computer language is based on.

He was meticulous, and would attempt to identify various software signatures, such as what Facebook messages look like.

Working in his bedroom and late into the night, Saliba was still recovering from his cancer therapy. Yet here, Saliba laid the groundwork for what would become known around the globe as the first useful Internet Evidence Finder (IEF) software program.

"On the hard drive there is all kinds of raw data," explains Adam Belsher, a past RIM sales and marketing vice-president. Belsher recently served as Vice President of the Verizon Business Unit for Research in Motion, now rebranded as Blackberry, after its flagship product.

Belsher was introduced to Saliba through their accountant, Mark Young. The two shared common family values and security concerns that go hand in hand with raising safe children in today's society.

In September 2012, Belsher joined Saliba and became CEO of JADsoftware. Then the two set off on a journey to rebrand the company, and Magnet Forensics



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was created.

Magnet Forensics is well positioned in the forensic market place. Its work is admired by police officers and has secured Saliba's reputation as crime fighter not only locally but world all over. His passion to assist those whose job it is to incarcerate human predators, has extended its reach farther than anyone could have imagined.

The IEF software gathers evidence from digital devices without altering the original device or the original data. In many cases the IEF software provides sufficient information/evidence to warrant a subpoena, a writ by a government agency, most often a court that has authority to compel testimony by a witness or production of evidence. As an example, if a file was uploaded to Drop Box, then the name, the date, the size of the file, "all this information may lead to a subpoena for Drop Box, asking to get this file because it is important to the investigation." There are many agencies involved in the process.

When Belsher started with Saliba he discovered that Jad's efforts were not being monetized as they could have been. Belsher said that, "Jad had given away the product for about a year and half" after he launched the company. By giving it away

to fellow law enforcement colleagues, Saliba wanted to help other law enforcement agencies, "especially around the child exploitation stuff: child pornography, child trafficking, all that kind of stuff. He was very passionate about that and he wanted to help people." And his program worked, "it really got to a point where all these customers, like the FBI, Homeland Security, Scotland Yard, all these police forces that essentially were using the product, downloading the product free." Saliba was duty-

"Our market is growing
Exponentially because cyber
crimes are on the rise."

driven, and his passion real. He was in it to help humankind, but he also needed to pay some bills.

The reputation of Saliba's software spread through word of mouth, and finally, in 2010, he started to charge for its use.

"Law enforcement is very collaborative. For example if Interpol is using it and they like it, then they're going to tell the Swedish police - crime is very global, there is a lot of cooperation." Belsher notes that this is entirely different from the corporate world. "Ford isn't going to tell GM they have found this manufacturing process and we're going to share it with you; that just doesn't happen. The opposite is true in law enforcement."

Belsher says, "the key is that Jad seeded the market" and had been doing so since 2009.

In September of 2011 Saliba left the Police force and Belsher left RIM. The two set off on a business journey that had a social context. Belsher says that "to Jad's credit he recognized where his strengths were and where they were not."

Belsher is a sales and marketing technology dude with a pedigree that goes well with marketing success. As vice-president of the Verizon unit of RIM he oversaw a increase in sales from \$400 million to over \$2 billion, in just four years.

What Belsher saw was a product that had been "soaking for quite a while". And that "adding new resources, iterating the product, focusing on new sales channels, finding new partners, accelerating the word of mouth, achieving product reviews, improving our website, getting all the dif-

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Key members of the Magnet Forensics team include: back row: left to right - Matthew Moody, Team Lead - Software Engineering; Tayfun Uzun, Product Development Manager; Chris Warden, Sales Manager; Front row: Lindsey Cournoyer, Marketing Manager; Nick Cosentino, Team Lead - Software Engineering; Kelly Braiden, HR Manager.

ferent marketing pieces in place and trying to get more people using it, would increase sales. Basically, we stepped up our game."

Revenues grew. "We grew revenue from 2011 to 2012 by 310% year over year." In January 2012 it was just Belsher and Saliba; by December 2012, they had 20 employees, in June 2013 they have 30.

Sixty percent of the sales and marketing people are former RIM employees, as are 10% in development.

It's not policy but they tend to like new grads as new hires. Belsher is careful to say that "as bad as this sounds, they don't have the 'corporate baggage' - they don't have all that 'I've tried it before and it doesn't work' or 'I don't think we can do it like that'. Everything is new to them and they work their asses off." In addition, he likes their drive - "they have the fire in their gut, the hunger... we've had a lot of luck with the new grads".

Culture is important to Belsher; he makes sure managers and team leads maintain that passion that became the connection between Jad and himself.

Magnet Forensics competes for talent, especially for the Gen Y population. They look for people who really want to make a difference in the world. By "coming to Magnet Forensics they hear and share in the stories from customers - how IEF helped this law enforcement agency con-

vict a pedophile, how it helped to solve some sort of mass shooting. Whatever it may be - it moves them."

The time has come, says Belcher, to "take it up a notch" as they strategize senior level positions. "I know my limitations, Jad knows his, so we are starting to think about who we need to round out our skill set, and really help us execute as we go forward."

And goals they have - to put criminals behind bars. "The beauty of our product," says Belcher, is that today there is more white collar crime than ever, and if intellectual property is involved, they can find it.

Whether it's a data breach or even a human resources dispute, emphasis remains on the universal way Magnet Forensics software fights crime, from homicide and organized crime, to pedophiles and child trafficking, to white collar offenses. All those kind of investigations usually have some kind of digital element. "Somebody has sent an email, somebody has done something on chat program, somebody has history in their web browser, somebody was doing research on how to dump a body, the list goes on and the market is forever evolving."

"In most cases there is usually more than one person involved in the crime - so there is a trail like a Gmail email that

somebody sent that they think is secure."

Belsher says that in 90% of the crime stories that hit the media, those popular investigations of horrific crime investigations, if there was a computer involved at all, "there is a good chance our stuff has been used".

However, technology constantly evolves. With the proliferation of Personal Digital Assistants, Magnet Forensics' focus is now on developing software to recover data from each new PDA marketed. Currently they search 160 programs from chat to email, file sharing and browser history. They have a customer base that is mostly law enforcement-based

Currently their software is been used in 93 countries in Europe, North America, Middle East, Latin America, and South Africa. "Computers are ubiquitous around the world ... most use common programs like Facebook, Google, etc. There are a lot of commonalities among the platforms used worldwide."

Cyber crime: you can do it from anywhere. Belsher contrasts the jewel thief who needs to break in to a building to secure the artifact with cyber crimes that can be done from a person's basement.

"Our market is growing exponentially because cyber crimes are on the rise." People "have more data available through their devices that they are storing, retrieving and creating on line - it doesn't stop."

With the goal of putting guilty people away and exonerating the innocent, the development team at Magnet Forensics constantly works on solutions for investigations and investigators. The new goal is to provide investigators and courts with the confidence to say "if you run our software, we don't guarantee we're going to find everything, but we search 160 different applications and websites and there is a good chance we are going to find some evidence." With the focus on mobile and cloud computing for 2013 it's shaping up to be an exciting year for Magnet Forensics.

Fifty percent of the work Magnet Forensic software contributes to is focused on helping children, by getting child predators off the streets and put away. The gratitude that has been bestowed on Saliba for his work is justified. He has been approached by unknown officers countless times, who thank him for his programs, because, for example, "I put three pedophiles away last week."

These are emotional moments for Saliba and Belsher, because their work matters most to those who are too young to know what matters. 