

PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH



Always striving for excellence

By VENTAS DE SEGURIDAD

This month, we feature Ariel Levinson, Sr. Marketing Communications Manager at Johnson Controls and a well-renowned professional in the electronic security industry.

Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Ariel Levinson grew up in turbulent times, which saw Argentina governed by military dictatorships and the outbreak of the infamous Falklands War in 1982 against the United Kingdom. Fortunately, as he was finishing secondary school, democracy was reinstated, coinciding with a new stage in his life—one which would imply many significant decisions.

Ariel was passionate about journalism and communications, but had his reservations as he had lived through the turmoil of the

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dictatorships, during which many journalists had been persecuted. As a result, he chose a completely different path: food engineering. After four years at university, however, he realized he needed to go back to his true calling in life and enrolled simultaneously in Broadcast Journalism at ISER and in a Communications degree at the University of Buenos Aires.

His first big job was at Diario La Nación, where he oversaw advertising sales for different consumer segments. Five years later, he was head of Marketing at the Argentine branch of Editora Abril, the largest magazine publisher in Brazil. After his short time at the publisher, he began his career in retail, working as head of marketing in several companies. To him, these were some of the most cherished times in his career.



After the company he was working at in 2002 underwent a few changes, Ariel closed that chapter of his life and relocated with his wife to Canada, where he joined the media agency Carat Canada as Account Director in charge of the Scotiabank International account. In 2009, Ariel left the company and, after facing the hardship of the general economic crisis—and with the help a few friends and his good contacts—found a new opportunity: a marketing position for Latin America at DSC, a Tyco International company specializing in intrusion products.



"In the first few months of 2010, the Tyco Security Products division was born—the 'umbrella' company linking DSC, Sur-Gard and Bentel (in the intrusion sector) with other businesses that developed and manufactured video and access control products, such as Kantech, Software House and American Dynamics. After a few months, the other brands were still missing a marketing representative for Latin America and the sales team really needed the support, so I was also put in charge of that. This meant

more brands, hundreds of new products, markets and clients that were very different to those in the intrusion world, and much more to learn", the Professional of the month explained.

As Tyco Security Products kept growing and racking up new brands and acquisitions (such as Visonic, Exacq, Illustra and many other brands that came in and out of the

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portfolio along the years), challenges continued to present themselves, though they also came with new collaborators and a promotion to Sr. Marketing Manager.

Ventas de Seguridad: What are the personal challenges, fears and goals you'd like to conquer next?

Ariel Levinson: No one can deny that the world has "digitalized" at an unbelievable pace. Nowadays, technology, in its broadest sense, and social media play a key role in communication and people's lives. I feel I'm part of a generation that went through a turning point, as we witnessed and experienced the origins of these changes as young adults, at the start of our careers.

As one of my professors used to say, we know about these new technologies and new ways to communicate, and we're always learning from them, but frankly we're like "tourists" in this new digital world, unlike our children, who were born into it. This poses a near-daily challenge: having to adapt and make sure that ship doesn't sail without us, because these changes evolve so fast that you can easily stay behind, both at a professional and at a personal level.

Ventas de Seguridad: What professional challenges do you face in terms of your relationship with employees and collaborators?

Ariel: When it comes to collaborators and people who report to you, especially those who are just starting in their careers, I feel it's important to act as a mentor and share the know-how and the experience you've acquired over time to help them make better decisions and do their best. But that also comes with sharing information, providing them with context. You can't expect them to do the job and meet your expectations if you don't give them the tools for that. And another key factor is listening—taking the time to get to know what other people think, to find out about their lives and, often, to learn from them.



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All this helps create good teams, where milestones and goals are achieved as a group, because the only way to deliver the expected results is to get each team member to do their share. And those of us who lead or coordinate those teams need to be generous and acknowledge each individual's contributions.

Ventas de Seguridad: What are the reasons behind your recognition in this market?

Ariel: As I mentioned earlier, I think it comes from that constant search for excellence, always trying to achieve top quality in every initiative or project. It's the passion you have, the hard work you put into what you do, and being honest and straightforward, without hidden agendas. It's about continuous training and always being open to learning. It's also about having the ability to find the right people to collaborate with to achieve work goals. And along with all this, it's also important to have a good dose of humor—to be able bring a smile to someone's face, even in difficult situations.

Ventas de Seguridad: How has the industry evolved in the last few years?

Ariel: I think that, in the last decade, the biggest shift in the industry has been the focus on integration and digitization. In the intrusion world, you can't just produce and sell standalone alarm panels, sensors, communicators, etc. There's no room for that anymore, and this applies not only to manufacturers, but to the whole chain, including distributors and installers. If there's no wireless connection between the products, if they can't integrate into a seamless solution, and if they don't have a high level of encryption to avoid being hacked into, then they won't work. In the residential segment, the fast-growing trend that we're already seeing is home automation, which integrates these elements with video capabilities and IoT, taking technology to the next level not only to enhance security but also to improve people's lives.

In the commercial and corporate segments, the integration of video, access control, intrusion, fire, HVAC

and other functionalities through facility and building management systems is becoming more and more widespread, as it's no longer only available to big corporations.

Cybersecurity is also gaining ground, because there's no point in paying a low price for a product or solution if that means exposing your assets to a high level of

Getting personal with the Professional of the month

Ariel has been married to Tamara for 22 years, and together they have raised their beautiful daughter, Tasha (14). In 2002, they left Argentina and moved to Canada in search of new opportunities and a fresh start.

"Although adapting to this beautiful city and country was not very hard, it was like starting over from scratch. Unless you've worked for a multinational corporation, people don't know the importance of the companies you worked at back home, no matter how big they might be in your country. We had to get used to leading our life in a different language, in one of the most multiethnic and multicultural cities in the world, to abide by new rules, to nurture new friendships, to build new business ties, and many other things that make up our daily lives," Ariel commented.

Ariel is also a great sports fan: not only is he a faithful supporter of River Plate soccer club, but he also follows his local basketball team, last year's NBA champions, the Toronto Raptors. He also enjoys playing tennis and watching the main tournaments on TV.

His other interests include politics, technology, business, sports, and everything related to media and show business. "I also love food! One of my favorite things to do is going out with my family and friends to try new restaurants and taste traditional food from other cultures and regions. Certainly, Toronto is the right city for that".



vulnerability, jeopardizing your facilities or services, and putting your private or sensitive information at risk of unwanted access.

The analytics built into these solutions not only help locate and identify incidents more quickly, but also provide businesses with key insights to boost efficiencies, improve processes and make better, high-impact decisions.

Ventas de Seguridad: What do think the future has in store for this industry in terms of threats, demand, progress, technology applications and expansion opportunities in Latin America?

Ariel: If you had asked me this same question a few months ago, before COVID-19, I would have had a completely different answer. There's no doubt that the world will change, and this pandemic will be a turning point. Social and commercial behaviors will change. It's quite clear that this situation has spurred the digitization of our lives, and that companies offering technology that allows us to reduce human intervention and optimize processes will be better positioned in this new world. This acceleration in technological changes will also be reflected in the workforce. There will be new activities and professional skill gaps, so we will have to retrain people to work differently or fulfill other tasks.

We'll have to wait and see how Latin America comes out of this pandemic. Although the region shares some cultural components, each country displays very different levels of socio-economic development, and some have a very large informal economy. Consequently, they will need to rethink the pillars of their economies, along with the role education will play in this repositioning.

Ventas de Seguridad: Do you recall any experience that taught you a meaningful lesson on both a professional and personal level?

Ariel: I'll never forget my first time at Expo-Seguridad Mexico, almost 10 years ago. We had a pretty big booth in an island stand that we shared with another company.

Even though I wasn't directly in charge of designing and building the booth, I was bringing in the marketing perspective to everything that was related to the event. It just so happened that, that year, we hired a Canadian company to build the stand because they had already done it for other shows, and that would reduce costs. The thing was that one of our walls adjacent to the other booth was lower than the maximum height permitted, whereas the other company had built their wall as high as they were allowed. So, the back of their structure could be seen from our stand and the finish looked awful, something which they had no intention of improving.

The Canadian vendor didn't have as many resources in that location, so they covered that part of the wall with a white bedsheet, but that didn't make it look much better either. The moral of the story is that you should always build the structure of your booth to the maximum height allowed to avoid unpleasant surprises, but also to work with local companies and local vendors that have the resources to quickly solve any mishaps that might come up in this type of event. ▼