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New Location: Temple Sewell in Newbury Park.

WHERE'S MY FOODTRUCK?

Pandemic pushes mobile vendors to hunt for new parking spots.

By KATHERINE TANGALAKIS-LIPPERT *Staff Reporter*

Temple Sewell, owner of food truck **Shrimp Vs. Chef**, spent most of last year looking for a parking place.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the Ventura County-based mobile vendor parked in front of breweries and at public events. He employed a small kitchen crew.

But as pandemic restrictions either canceled or limited attendance at those venues, he cut his workforce and needed a new strategy.

According to one estimate, since the pandemic struck more than half of the trucks in Southern California have ceased operations.

In December, Sewell struck a deal with **Wendy's Fuel**, a gas station in Newbury Park, where he sets up. Other food trucks have found new clientele at parks, construction sites or auto garages.

"My sales are up," Sewell said. "Our businesses in general, especially the mom-and-pop places, or the small businesses, once the pandemic hit people realized, 'Hey, we need to support these people.'"

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PHOTO BY MIKE BAKER

Startup Pays to Sell Your Data

TECHNOLOGY: BIGToken adds BitCoin to cashout options.

By KATHERINE TANGALAKIS-LIPPERT *Staff Reporter*

BIGToken, a Westlake Village-based data marketplace, plans to offer users the option to cash-out in cryptocurrency for the sale of their personal data. The opt-in marketplace – which allows users to sign up to share their data with third-party marketing agencies and brands in ex-

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PR Shops Await Message Glut

LIST: Firms weathered crisis, now expect business to pick up.

By AMY STULICK *Staff Reporter*

THE LIST
PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS
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As the economy reopens, public relations firms in the Valley region expect clients will have plenty of messages to tout. As a result, they foresee a competitive market in the near future.

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SPECIAL REPORT
CYBERSECURITY

Ransomware, phishing, ex-employees and fake invoices – they're all part of the looming threat to companies on the internet. While companies can take action such as hiring a cybersecurity firm, they must balance minimizing liabilities without making their technology so cumbersome it alienates customers. **George Baldonado**, left, the owner of **Oasis Technology** in Camarillo, explains that hackers' "primary attack vector is through regular retail customers to get into their bank accounts and steal their money." Learn the rules of engagement in this Special Report.

BEGINNING ON PAGE 11

Fire-Resistant Building Materials Stir Debate

REGULATION: Builders see more cost; officials want safety.

By MICHAEL AUSHENKER *Staff Reporter*

A new bill seeks to impose more fire prevention measures on builders, but will it prove overzealous for developers and builders in an industry already fraught with financial and regulatory challenges?

Last month, Los Angeles City Council passed a motion that proposes to expand fire life safety building practices in the city. The regulatory changes were inspired by the Da Vinci arson fire in downtown L.A., as well as the Woolsey Fire and the related Camp Fire that burned in Los Angeles and Ventura counties several years ago.

L.A. City Council member **Monica Rodriguez**, who led the Public Safety Committee, introduced the bill with the support of a co-spon-

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PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Calabasas: Woolsey Fire damage.

MAIL TO:

THE LIST
PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS
Ranked by Valley-area employees
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NoHo Membership Club
Owners of a North Hollywood bar switch business models to curb the risks of COVID. p. 3

New Boss at Tarzana Hospital
Nick Lymberopoulus, right, takes the helm at Providence Cedars-Sinai Tarzana Medical Center. p. 6

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CYBERSECURITY SPECIAL REPORT

WEB DANGER

For managers, security presents a conundrum: No matter how much you spend, you can never eliminate all the risk. That's particularly true with cyber attacks. A report last year by consulting firm **Accenture** found that "most organizations are getting better at preventing direct cyberattacks. But in the shape-shifting world of cybersecurity, attackers have already moved on to indirect targets, such as vendors and other third parties in the supply chain." This Special Report looks at both the preventative side, where businesses hire firms to set up protective technology and monitor firewalls; and the back end, where insurance and other risk management tools can help in the event of a catastrophic breach. The goal, according to the Accenture report, is "cyber resilience."

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Local tech firms discuss cyber threats **PAGE 12**

How to manage online risk. **PAGE 15**

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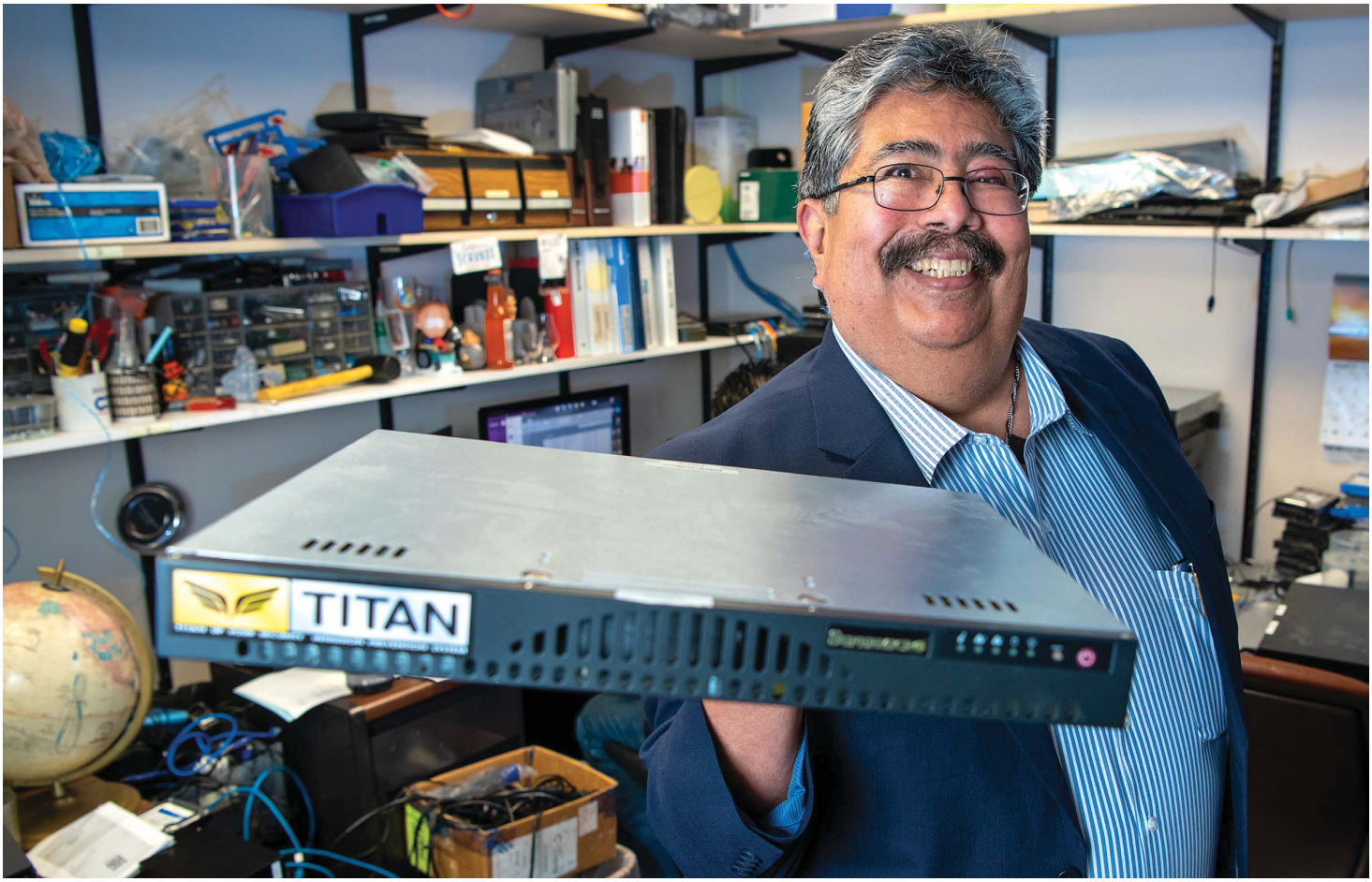
CYBERSECURITY SPECIAL REPORT



FENDING OFF HACKER ATTACKS

Valley IT firms protect clients from an economic threat 'exponentially larger than the damage inflicted from natural disasters.'

By **MARK R. MADLER** *Staff Reporter*

On a recent morning, **George Baldonado** was monitoring online activity for a client – a government contractor in the Los Angeles area – at his Camarillo business, **Oasis Technology**, which provides IT consulting and security software.

That client had 120 cyber terrorist attacks, Baldonado said, and another 3,800 attempts to get into its network from outside the U.S.

All this occurred before 10:30 a.m.

"There was one attack trying to break into the firewall and there had been 245 attacks into their Office 365 to try to get into their email," he explained.

That goes to show just how serious hackers are to get into the computer networks of companies big and small. Professionals in the cybersecurity industry in the greater San Fernando Valley region all have similar stories of attacks that have happened to clients.

Take, for example, what happened to **Yuri Aberfeld**.

The chief executive of **ITSupportLA.com**, a Tarzana tech support company, knows personally the feeling when a hacker finds a cybersecurity breach.

Aberfeld said that in 2019, hackers created a website very similar to his, except that it was ITSuportLA.com, with just one "p."

The fake site began to contact vendors in the information technology industry and place orders that were then put through by those companies, Aberfeld said.

"Then they would call us for payment, and we would have to explain that it wasn't us and they had got scammed," he added.

Everything about the fake website mirrored the actual website of Aberfeld's company except for a change in the phone number.

"I even called one time and said, 'Who is this?' and the person said, 'This is Yuri.' I said, 'No, this is Yuri,' and the person hung up," Aberfeld said. "The audacity is just crazy to me."

But hackers steal, from Aberfeld and Baldonado's clients alike, because it pays.

According to **Cybersecurity Ventures**, a research and publishing firm in Northport N.Y., cybercrimes will inflict a total of $6 trillion in damages globally in 2021 and increase to $10.5 trillion by 2025. That figure was only $3 trillion in 2015.

"This represents the greatest transfer pf economic wealth in history, risks the incentives for innovation and investment, is exponentially larger than the damage inflicted

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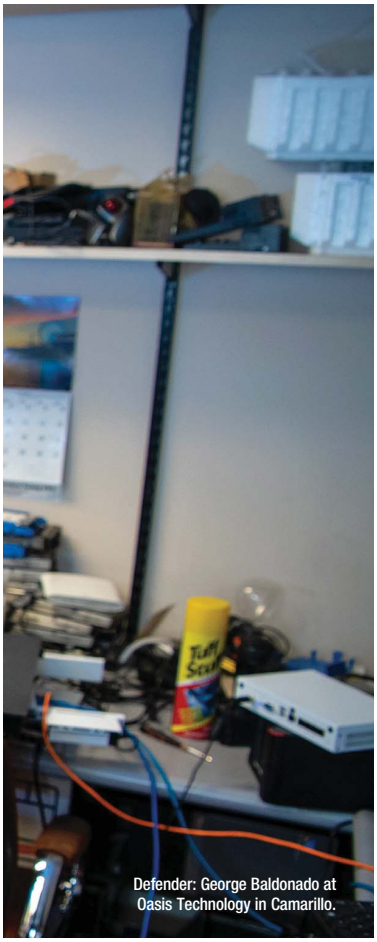

Defender: George Baldonado at Oasis Technology in Camarillo.


Collaborative: Baldonado talks with Project Manager Mike Meyers.

PHOTOS BY MIKE BAKER

from natural disasters in a year, and will be more profitable than the global trade of all major illegal drugs combined," wrote **Steve Morgan**, founder of Cybersecurity Ventures and editor-in-chief of Cybercrime magazine, in a story published in November edition of the publication.


Yuri Aberfeld

Biggest threats

Ask a cybersecurity professional what the biggest threats are and the answers will be various.

Aberfeld said it was ransomware, a program that threatens to publish a user's personal data on the internet or else block access to it unless as ransom is paid. He also named phishing campaigns. In these attacks, an email is sent out in hopes that a recipient will click on it and download the ransomware software.

"It is like casting a net in the ocean. Whatever you catch, you catch," Aberfeld said.

A variation of that attack is spear phishing – or an attempt that is focused on a specific user because he or she had clicked on a phishing email in the past or his or her login and password information was exposed on the dark web, he added.

"They find out who are the key employees of a company and pretend to be those employees," Aberfeld said.

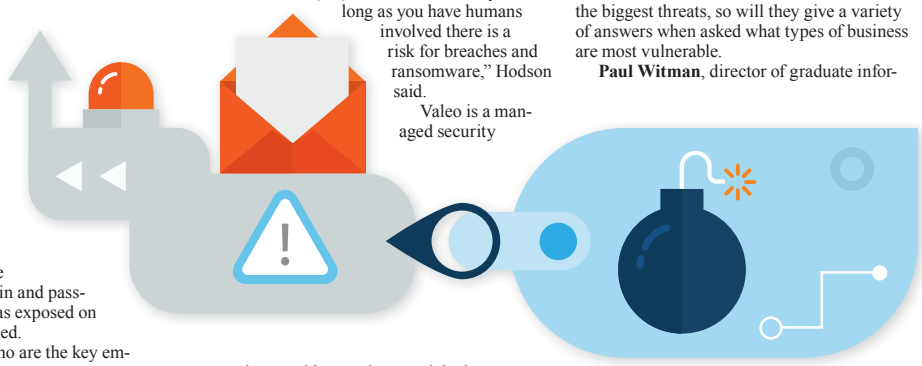
Baldonado thinks the biggest threats come from just the explosion of technology.

Companies are not concerned with security and just focus on getting a new product out to market and gaining market share, he said.

"People aren't concerned when they release their product about the actual security part," Baldonado added.

Matthew Hodson, chief information officer at **Valeo Networks**, the Florida-based IT division of **Saalex Corp.** in Camarillo, said that the biggest threat to a company's computer network comes from its employees.

"You can throw as much money as you want at your infrastructure, your software packages, your configuration, your firewalls, (but) at the end of the day as long as you have humans involved there is a risk for breaches and ransomware," Hodson said.



Valeo is a managed security service provider serving municipal, state and county governments, small-to-medium sized businesses, and nonprofits. It has offices nationwide, including in Camarillo.

Other threats mentioned by Hodson are from companies not being ready to have employees working from home due to the coronavirus pandemic. These firms leave themselves open to cyber-attacks because they have employees using computers and networks that are home-based and not well protected.

"We have seen with companies where that is where a hack presents itself – from the home piece of the network and spreads to the business," Hodson said.

Vulnerable sectors

Just as cybersecurity professionals give a variety of responses when asked to identify the biggest threats, so will they give a variety of answers when asked what types of business are most vulnerable.

Paul Witman, director of graduate information technology programs at **California Lutheran University** in Thousand Oaks, said the businesses most at risk are those with light capability for managing attacks. That would include smaller companies and companies that don't spend a lot of energy on cybersecurity-related functions.

"They don't train their staff enough and don't have updated virus protection on their computers," Witman said. "All of those are risk factors that would make it more likely that an organization would be victimized."

Continued on page 14

ITSupportLA

HEADQUARTERS: Tarzana
CEO: Yuri Aberfeld
BUSINESS: Managed IT, cybersecurity, backup and website design services
NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 1
EMPLOYEES: 15
NOTABLE: Aberfeld was recently named to serve on the board of the Valley Community Legal Foundation.

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CYBERSECURITY SPECIAL REPORT

Baldonado at Oasis Technology said that the biggest risk is where the money is at. That includes government computers and the financial and medical sectors.

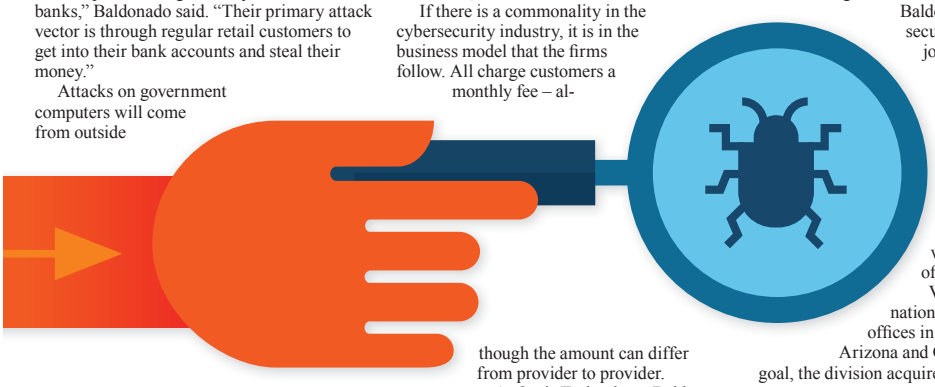
"People want to get money out of the banks," Baldonado said. "Their primary attack vector is through regular retail customers to get into their bank accounts and steal their money."

Attacks on government computers will come from outside the country. China and Russia are the main culprits there, he added.

And when it comes to medical records, hackers go after those because they translate into money as well because getting the information from those files helps in perpetuating Medicare fraud and Social Security fraud, he said.

Hodson said that anybody is vulnerable and that hackers do not pick one particular company or industry over another.

"The ones with the biggest vulnerabilities will get hit," he added. "We have seen that with state, county and city municipalities because they do not have the budgets or do not see themselves as vulnerable."



Cost of protection

If there is a commonality in the cybersecurity industry, it is in the business model that the firms follow. All charge customers a monthly fee – although the amount can differ from provider to provider.

At Oasis Technology, Baldonado's services can cost as low as $400 or high as $7,000 a month depending on the level of monitoring and security. Aberfeld charges between $50 and $85 per user, depending, like Baldonado, on the technology used at the client company.

Hodson, of Valeo Networks, said the cost depends on the size of the business, the industry they are in, the number of computers and any additional services the company provides, he said.

"We have clients with 10 employees who pay $1,000 a month and others with 10 locations in the U.S. and Mexico who will pay $25,000," Hodson said.

All the companies are growing and hiring, although finding qualified employees can be tough.

Baldonado said that cybersecurity is not an 8 to 5 job. Monitoring goes on all the time and needs people who are committed to it.

"There are so many ins and outs to cybersecurity that a lot of people either don't have the experience or don't want to go to that level of support," he added.

Valeo's goal is to go nationwide and add to its offices in Florida, California, Arizona and Oregon. To reach that goal, the division acquired late last year Etech Solutions, a managed service provider in Des Moines, Iowa.

Key to attracting and retaining employees with the skillsets needed for cybersecurity is having a company culture that keeps the workers happy, engaged and doing something they like, Hodson said.

"We want to make sure that we help them grow into that role in the company," he added. "That will reflect to the customer base. They will have a good customer experience and that will help the company grow overall."

Educational programs like those at Cal Lutheran are the training ground for these employees that Valeo and Oasis look to hire.

Cal Lutheran bestows a master's degrees in information technology with a focus on cybersecurity and a separate cybersecurity certificate.

"We have a variety of classes that we offer students to be successful as cybersecurity professionals," Witman said. "We don't train specifically for the industry certification, but the courses all lead in that direction."

Oasis Technology

HEADQUARTERS: Camarillo
CEO: George Baldonado
BUSINESS: IT consulting and security software
NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 2
EMPLOYEES: 20
NOTABLE: Offers the patented Titan security software to protect a network's firewall to keep hackers out.

Valeo Networks

HEADQUARTERS: Rockledge, Fla.
CEO: Travis Mack
BUSINESS: Managed IT, cybersecurity and cloud computing services
NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 7
EMPLOYEES: 80
NOTABLE: The commercial information technology division of Saalex Corp. in Camarillo.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S COUNCIL

The San Fernando Valley Business Journal is proud to present our Women's Council, honoring top businesswomen in the Valley area. Join us for a virtual awards ceremony and enjoy a program filled with inspiration and recognition as we honor women who have made a difference throughout the San Fernando, Conejo, Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley area. Award Categories: CEO of the Year, Executive of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Rising Star, Not-For-Profit Leader, Business Owner of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award.

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