

# FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO INDUSTRY LEADER

***Matson Alarm Company, Inc. wins the day with hard work, innovation***

by Susan Diemont-Conwell

**W**hen the Matson brothers began *Matson Alarm Company, Inc.* in 1974, they did it all—sales, design, installation and service—from the confines of their parents' two-car garage in Fresno, California.

"My dad had a feeling that the alarm industry would be big going into the 1980s," says Vice President Mike Matson. "My brother, Larry, was selling vacuum cleaners at the time. I was finishing up high school. We

were broke and knew absolutely nothing about security systems. But we decided we wanted to do it, and we figured out a way."

In those early years, Matson President Larry headed up sales, and Mike and his brother, John, would install the systems. "Our old saying was, 'Yeah, we can do that. Now, how are we going to do that?'" Mike jokes. "But we were too stupid to quit. We lived and breathed the business and made the company into what it is today."



The sales team of Matson Alarm Company, Inc. visits manufacturer Digital Monitoring Products (DMP), which provides the company's intrusion alarm and access control systems. Shown (from left) are Paul Wassem, Larry Matson, Rebecca Matson Purtz, Mike Matson, Ben Kiser, Shirley Fay, Avi Druker, Dawn Souza and Michael Matson Jr.

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**Matson Alarm Company, Inc. custom designs each security system. Shown, installation technician Aaron Rodriguez pulls wire for a commercial project.**



**Senior installation technician Dashel Rocha installs a Control4 controller unit in the living room at a residential customer's house.**

Matson Alarm Company is today the largest, privately owned security company in the Central Valley and number 47 in the nation, according to Security Distributing & Marketing (SDM) magazine's Top 100 list. "We have been ranked on SDM's Top 100 security firms in the U.S. list for 20 consecutive years," Mike says.

### TRUSTED SERVICES

Though Mike and Larry bought out their brother, John, in 1981, the company is still very much a family enterprise. Larry's daughter, Rebecca Matson Purtz, serves as director of business development. Larry's other daughter, Katie Williamson, heads up social media, while Mike's son, Michael Matson, works in sales.

With nearly 100 employees, Matson Alarm Company is headquartered

in Fresno with satellite offices in Visalia, Bakersfield and Modesto. The company offers a full suite of customized services for both residential and commercial customers, including internet-enabled control devices, real-time video surveillance, fire-alarm systems, GPS fleet-tracking and automated building access systems.

Housed in its corporate office, Matson Alarm Company's central monitoring station is UL-listed, TMA (CSAA) Five Diamond Certified, and fully owned by the company. "We don't outsource to third parties," Rebecca says. "Customers feel confident knowing when they need us, we're there—24/7."

### AHEAD OF THE TRENDS

"At Matson Alarm Company, we are always researching new and better

technologies that not only enhance security, but make life easier for our customers," Rebecca says. That includes integrating everything from the security system and intercom to lighting, music and a home theater into one automated control system.

"We've gotten where we are today by spotting and staying ahead of the trends," Mike says. "When our competitors doubted us or said something wouldn't work, we pushed ahead. Once they realized what we were doing was working, they played catch up."

Soon after the Matson brothers began installing security systems, they realized the industry's need for a centralized monitoring system. "Back then, everyone had a direct line to their phones, but to run a copper wire

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back to the central station from each house was cost prohibitive,” Mike says. “We found a way to receive notifications over the phone through what was called a delta dialer. We had a code—1 for fire, 2 for medical and 3 for burglar—and a code for each customer. We started that trend in the Central Valley.”

Another way Matson Alarm Company moved ahead of its competitors was in the leasing of equipment. “Back in the 1980s, customers had to purchase their alarm system for about \$1,500 and then pay \$12 a month for the monitoring service,” Mike says. “We came up with the idea of leasing the equipment to customers. We’d charge \$700 for the install and then

\$24.50 a month. No one thought the marketing strategy would work, but it was highly successful.”

### CUSTOMIZED SERVICES

Matson Alarm Company prides itself on its personal touch. “We are locally owned and operated and custom design each system—whether commercial or residential,” Mike says. He cites the example of Riverstone, a 2,000-acre, master-planned community in Madera County. “Riverstone has a very large clubhouse with a fitness center, pool and spa. We designed a package that includes video surveillance and controlled facility access, giving residents independent access to the facilities without the need for staffing.”



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**Mike Matson, Vice President, Matson Alarm Company, Inc.**



**Matson Alarm Company, Inc. designs centralized automated systems that control everything from fire and security systems to building access, videoconferencing and other information technology services. Shown, senior automation specialist AJ Russell (left) and operations manager Brian Crouse.**

For an orthopedic medical office, Matson Alarm Company worked with the owner of the practice to design a centralized, automated system that controls everything from the fire and security systems to building access, video conferencing and other information technology services in the office.

### COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

The company is active in advocating for the security industry in California. Mike serves on the board of directors for the California Alarm Association (CAA) and is active in CAA’s Central Valley division, Mid-Cal Alarm Association. “The California Alarm Association works to preserve our ability to enhance public safety in our communities,” Mike says. “For example, if a local police department decides it no longer wants to respond to security calls, a small alarm company can’t do much. But CAA is large and has leverage to effect positive change.”

Each year, Mike serves at the helm of a charity golf tournament sponsored by the Mid-Cal Alarm Association. "Mike has been the driving force behind this golf tournament for years," Rebecca says. "Matson Alarm Company is the largest sponsor of the event, and all our employees volunteer." Tournament proceeds—often upward of \$50,000—are donated to local nonprofits, including the Madera County Sheriff's Department K-9 unit, Parents & Addicts in Need, Made for Them, the Marjaree Mason Center and the Fresno Police Department.

In addition to its work with the golf tournament, the company donates its time and materials to worthy community groups. Matson Alarm Company donated a security system to Reading Heart, a book donation program dedicated to serving children in hospitals and children with limited access to books, and donated a camera system to the Marjaree Mason Center, which supports and empowers adults and children affected by domestic violence.

## INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES

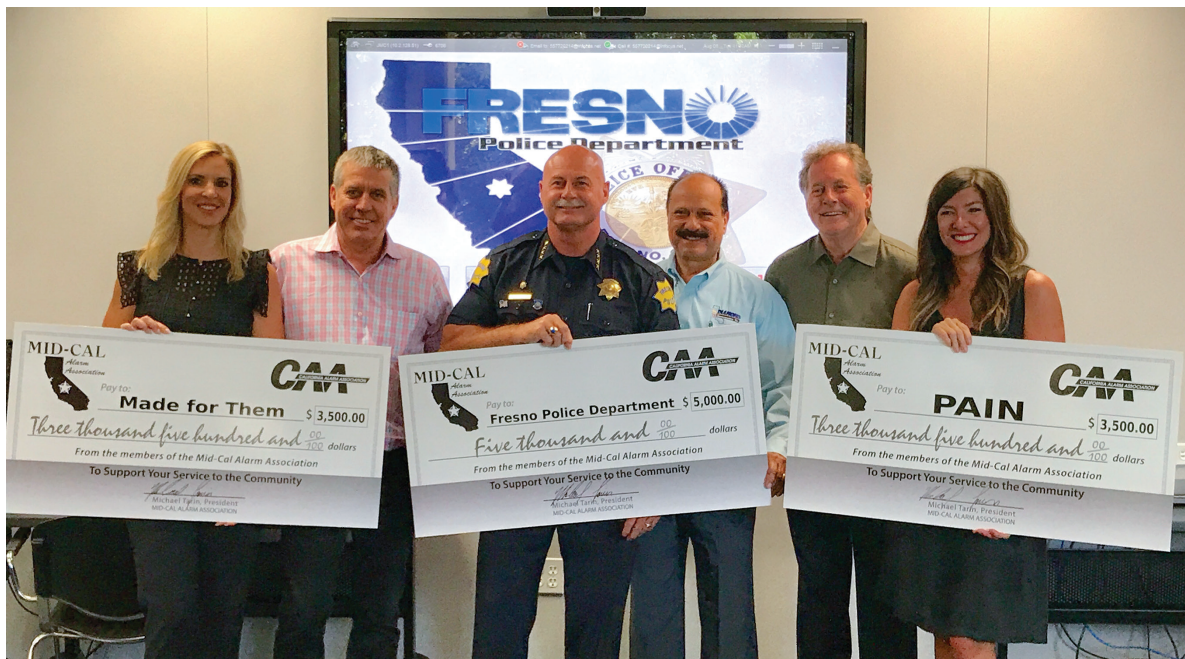
Over a third of the company's nearly 100 employees have been with Matson Alarm Company for at least 15 years, with a few boasting 25 years. "We have the best employees out there," Rebecca says. "We invest in our people, providing them with a great deal of training."

According to Mike, employees are empowered to make decisions out in the field. "We don't micromanage our employees. They work hard, and we trust them."

Matson Alarm Company not only hosts fun companywide events, like trips to Six Flags Magic Mountain and yearly Christmas parties, but also provides lunch in the office every Friday for employees. "Friday lunch is an opportunity for employees to relax, visit and get to know each other," Rebecca says.

"Larry and I have always said that we're not providing a living for us. We're providing a living for a whole lot of families," Mike says. "At Matson Alarm Company, we work hard to deliver exemplary customer service, and we've got a very dedicated, talented team of employees who do just that." 🐾

*With more than 20 years in the communications industry, Susan Diemont-Conwell works with companies, nonprofits and individuals to produce stories and publications that move and inspire.*



Matson Alarm Company, Inc. is dedicated to giving back to the community, sponsoring and volunteering for a Mid-Cal Alarm Association charity golf tournament.