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### Keeping Tabs On Tablet PCs, Notebooks And Other Portable Systems



As computers get smaller, and workers more mobile, there is an increasing concern for notebook theft among enterprise users.

In fact, computer theft consistently rates as one of the top concerns in a number of surveys of IT departments across the nation. At least one large insurer of portable systems, Safeware Inc., reported that more than 300,000 systems were stolen in a single year (1999), representing \$800 million in losses. Many developers are now working on schemes that would allow them to render the data and applications useless on a mobile device, be it a notebook or something much smaller, like a handheld PC or interactive pager.

A far better idea is to prevent someone from stealing the notebook computer in the first place, preferably without using chains and locks to shackle the device to your wrist or a nearby vending machine. Caveo Technology, Inc., a tiny company located in Cambridge, MA has developed one such non-intrusive security alternative, which uses advanced motion sensors and intuitive software to alert owners when their system suddenly sprouts legs. Okay, we know you've heard all sorts of horror stories about these wonderful sensing devices. How they go off at the wrong time, and manage to attract undue attention when all you want it's a quiet cup of coffee in an airport lounge. But, this is different.

The Caveo Anti-Theft technology employs motion-sensing techniques that consists of sensors developed by Analog Devices, Inc., as well as proprietary firm ware and software formulated by Caveo. Together, these elements help to deter equipment thefts through the use of piercing (and subtle) audible warning signals. Should the thief ignore these, then the system will prevent an unauthorized person from booting up the system and retrieving all sorts of confidential data and applications. If that is not enough, Caveo' system is also compatible with a variety of a complementary security products, such as biometrics and trace callback software. Disarming the system requires entering up to a 16-digit password.

Mobile Insights first spoke with Caveo CEO David Lee back in March of this year. At that time, the company had little more than a prototype and a promise. Lee drew upon his experience at Analog Devices to acquire and fine tune the sensor technology, and worked with a number of MIT students on the software. Although the technology was originally designed to be embedded into portable systems, he admitted back then that getting a manufacturer to commit to space on a motherboard was probably as tough as trying to get shelf space for a new food product in a supermarket (pretty difficult...trust us!). Recently, however, the company unveiled a PCMCIA card that slips into a laptop and performs the same security duties.

One of the benefits of the system is that users don't have to think about activating it, which is important since the biggest roadblock to security is user apathy. Caveo's technology activates automatically when Windows boots up. It also allows up to five attempts to log in with a password before switching itself and the system off for a 'cooling off period', says Lee. The passwords are also stored in the microprocessor and ROM, and not the hard disk, which is a further deterrent to the non-professional thief.

Caveo is working hard to spread its gospel of security to the enterprise masses, which is a tough job considering the economy and cutbacks in spending. The company is also trying to drum up support from systems manufacturers who might want to use the Caveo technology as an embedded alternative (a route which Mobile Insights recommends since it eliminates the possibility of forgetting to add on an add-in device).

Meanwhile, Caveo has been looking to expand the technology to other areas. One planned product is called Caveo Anti-Touch, and targets the art world and the protection of paintings and other objets d'art (available next year). Another is a gesture recognition system for PDAs, which can be used for security, navigation, and scrolling and general input. We can think of a handful of other applications for the Caveo system, but would much rather hear from you. If you have some ideas, send them along to us, or directly to David Lee at Caveo ([www.caveo.com](http://www.caveo.com)).