

NORTH KOREA: CRACKING CAPITALISM'S LAST FRONTIER

OCTOBER 24 • 2011 EDITION

Forbes

AMERICA'S MOST

RECKLESS BILLIONAIRE

LAND GRABS, AGGRESSIVE ACCOUNTING, RECORD PROFITS.
AUBREY MCCLENDON IS DETERMINED TO TURN CHESAPEAKE
ENERGY INTO A JUGGERNAUT—OR GO BUST TRYING.

\$5.99



TECHNOLOGY

SECURITY

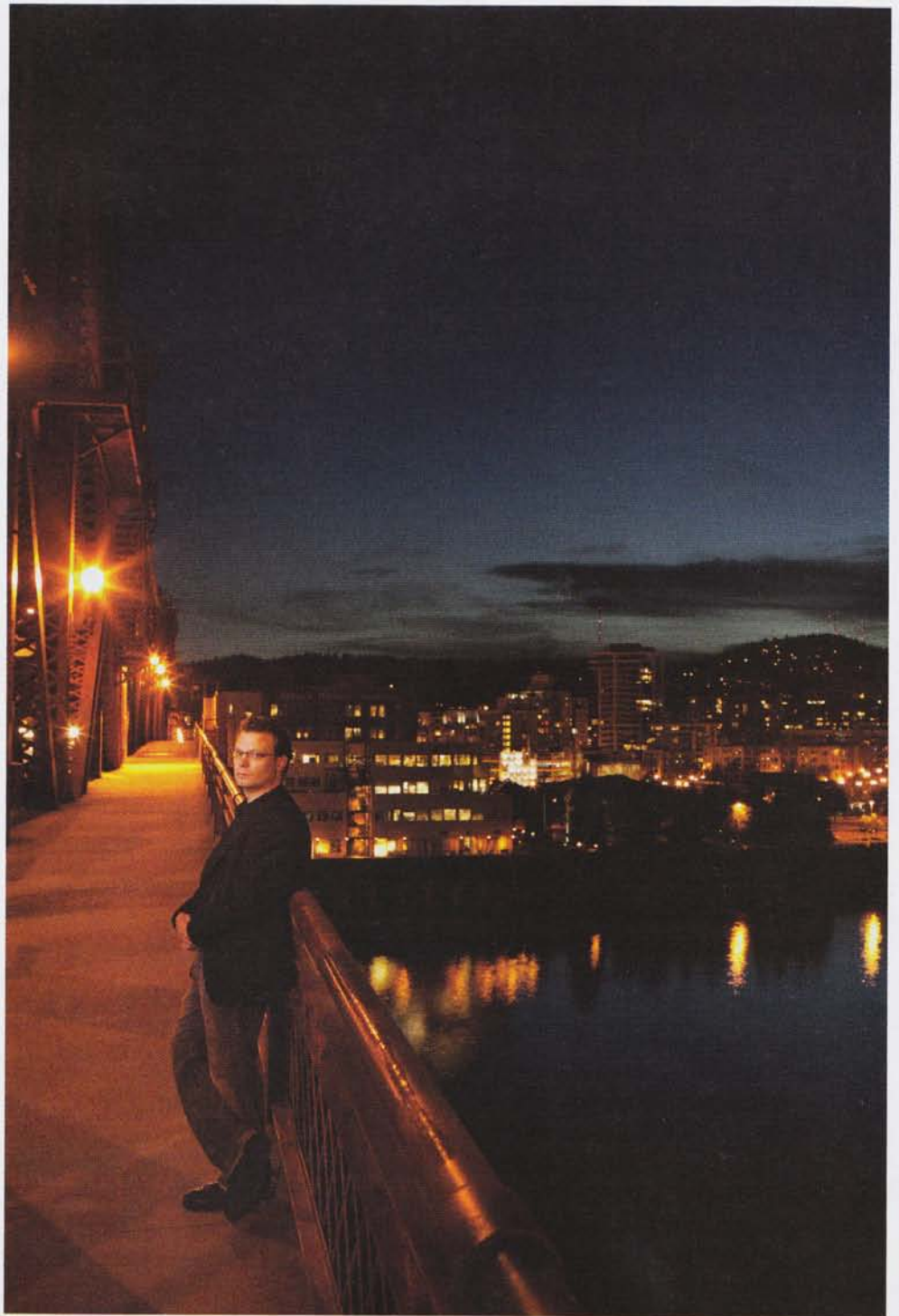
To Shame A Thief

Mobile tracking can stop gadget and data losses. This power in the wrong hands can lead to some costly embarrassments.

BY KASHMIR HILL

ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON in August a miscreant severed the anti-theft cables on a Samsung Epic and an HTC Evo in a Sprint store at a mall in Washington State. Shoplifting is common at the mall, and the stolen goods and identities of the culprits are usually written off as lost causes. But in this case the police were able to track the phones to an apartment complex nearby, thanks to the ability of the phones to signal their whereabouts.

Sprint had been installing on its floor models a software program called GadgetTrak that locates a phone or laptop using its GPS chip and Wi-Fi positioning. The program can also turn on a phonecam remotely and start taking pictures. The cops were able to pinpoint the right apartment unit after



Ken Westin, CEO of Portland's GadgetTrak, has 150,000 customers paying for security.

showing residents photos of the culprit from his purloined phone. The 19-year-old suspect was later indicted for felony theft.

Electronics theft is the crime equivalent of white noise, going on around us all the time. A laptop is stolen every minute across all U.S. airports, according to a 2008 Ponemon Institute study. (Most theft-prone: LAX.) An industry has grown up to thwart the rampant theft. The business of keeping mobile devices secure was a \$676 million industry in 2010 globally, and Global Industry Analysts projects it will be \$5.8 billion by 2015. This revenue number includes antivirus, antimalware and network-security software.

Free mobile security apps abound, such as Where's My Droid or Find My iPhone to locate your smartphone and programs to back up and restore data such as Apple's iCloud service. When a small plane disappeared off the coast of Chile in September, relatives of one of the 17 crash victims helped locate the plane

by signing into the deceased passenger's Find My iPhone account and giving investigators its last GPS position.

Paid services offer more extensive remote access, including the ability to turn on a phone, operate its camera, pull up a virtual copy of its home screen and monitor activity on the device. GadgetTrak, a small startup in Portland, Ore., has 150,000 customers paying \$20 a year for its service. Says Chief Executive Ken Westin, "This will have an impact on whether people steal or not."

The biggest player in laptop recovery is Absolute Software of Vancouver, B.C. It has deals with companies such as Dell and HP to embed its tracking agent into their computers' boot-up software, where it is more difficult for a thief to remove than from the hard drive. The company claims more than 5 million customers and says it recovers more than 50 laptops every week.

To the individual, the power to track or remotely control a laptop or

phone seems like a good thing. But to society, the power to track, intercept and share the contents of a mobile device has ripple effects that are not always so good. If tracking services are not used carefully and within the bounds of privacy laws, legitimate owners and security professionals can get into legal gray areas, the repercussions of which could be far more expensive than a replacement iPhone.

In 2010 parents of a Pennsylvania high schooler sued Lower Merion School District for "spying" on their son using Absolute surveillance software. School technicians had activated and taken pictures of a boy using his own webcam after the school mistakenly thought the laptop had been stolen. The district paid \$610,000 to settle the lawsuit.

In response Absolute changed one of its services so that customers cannot activate webcams remotely. "That's best left in the hands of professionals," said Stephen Midgley, Absolute's head of marketing. It has always kept stricter privacy safe-

Lost and Found

These services will help hunt down your smartphone or laptop. Some are free. Some you pay for. No matter what service you choose, you must enable the program before your device goes missing.

Find My iPhone

FREE

PROS: E-mail notification when device is found; can display message on screen if device not password-protected.

CONS: Not available for Android.

Where's My Droid

FREE OR \$3.99 FOR PREMIUM

PROS: Can force phone to ring when in silent mode.

CONS: A separate phone needed to activate the text-message-prompted tracking.

LookOut

FREE OR \$29.99/YEAR FOR PREMIUM

PROS: Browser-based tracking; includes antivirus and antimalware smartphone protection.

CONS: Only available for Android.

Gadget Trak

\$19.95/YEAR

PROS: Easy to install; DIY tracking; can snap photos remotely.

CONS: Can't delete files remotely; easily detected by thief as it shows up in program files.

LoJack For Laptops

\$24.99/YEAR

PROS: Difficult for thieves to detect or remove; technicians take the lead in working with police on retrieval.

CONS: Can only delete files, not retrieve them.

Laptop Cop

\$49.95/YEAR

PROS: Can retrieve and delete files.

CONS: Must send a copy of the police report before they'll turn tracking on.

Hidden

\$15/YEAR FOR BASIC PLAN

PROS: No visible sign on computer that app is tracking location and taking screenshots; can snap photos with webcam.

CONS: Only available for Macs.

guards on its two main services: Lo-Jack for Laptops and Computrace. Customers of those services must first file police reports before the surveillance capabilities can be activated. Only Absolute technicians are granted access to the camera and activity logs. The technicians convey whatever data they can get to the police.

But even the professionals sometimes get into trouble. When an Ohio school district reported a student's laptop missing in 2008, an Absolute technician tracked it down to the home of Susan Clements-Jeffrey, who turned out to be a teacher in a different district. His inspection of her activity turned up a bunch of nude photos she'd been exchanging with her long-distance boyfriend. The technician handed the salacious

snaps to the cops. When police went to her home to seize the laptop they called her stupid and told her she "should have known better than to do that kind of stuff on the webcam." Clements-Jeffrey claimed she didn't know the laptop was stolen. (Its \$60 price might have been one clue.) She sued Absolute for its technicians' violation of her privacy. Absolute settled the case for an undisclosed amount before it could go to a jury, leaving no clear precedent for how courts will react to these cases in the future.

Businesses regard device theft quite differently than schools and consumers do. For them the greater value is in the data and not the device itself. "BlackBerrys are built for business and have [remote locking and tracking] features built in, but they're increasingly being pushed aside by

employees who want to use Androids and iPhones. Many businesses are turning a blind eye toward the repercussions of an employee losing one of these, along with the valuable corporate data on it," says Chester Wisniewski, a senior advisor at security-software firm Sophos.

Awareness Technologies, which offers a program called Laptop Cop, tracks exactly what a person in possession of a laptop is doing and allows customers to retrieve and delete data from the device remotely. Its customers include IBM, Wendy's and Wells Fargo. "A big part of our pitch used to be the ability to get the laptop back," says Chief Strategy Officer Ron Penna. "Our customers were more concerned with getting their data back, being able to delete any sensitive data on the device and seeing whether the




Radar designed to detect traffic coming in either direction behind you.*

*Optional BLIS® with cross-traffic alert. Availability varies by vehicle.

person in possession of the device actually opened any of the Excel worksheets or Word doc files they're worried about."

For those who do want their devices back, it's best not to try to retrieve something oneself, says San Francisco police officer Marc Hinch, who runs Stolen911, a blog devoted to tracking down stolen property. That may be frustrating for technology-equipped people who can now be a step ahead of the cops. "It's exciting but novel to be able to fight crime from your smartphone," says Hinch.

Ron Penna of Awareness Technologies is confident that his is a growth industry. "Everything is going to be trackable as a nonpaid service within five years," says Penna. "Even my car keys will be able to tell me where they are." 

The Conversation



Kashmir Hill

made the case in a blog post that ...

Decent Exposure?

Post: "Reminder: The Embarrassing Naked Photos On A Stolen Laptop May Not Belong To The Thief."

KASHMIR HILL:

Thieves lose legal rights to privacy on their stolen goods. But what if users don't know it's a stolen device? Even if they do know it's stolen, is it really necessary for the laptop police (and the real police) to be grabbing and exchanging their naked photos?

RICHPASCO:

I was taught that possessing stolen goods was as much of a crime as stealing them, so it was incumbent on a buyer of second-hand goods to make sure the seller had clear title. Seems to me the teacher was wrong for buying a stolen laptop from a student, so should not enjoy immunity from any resulting embarrassment.



Even in reverse, we're thinking ahead.



Drive one.