

# LEADERSHIP PROFILE

BY DAVID SILVERBERG

SAY THE WORDS “MASS NOTIFICATION” AND ONE IMMEDIATELY THINKS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS AND NATURAL DISASTERS AND THE NEED TO ALERT PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY TO THE DANGER AROUND THEM.

But sometimes, mass notification can be more benign—as when, in November 2006, a child wandered away from his parents on the grounds of Edwards Air Force Base in California. With 11,000 acres of base, including dry lake beds, the search for the child seemed daunting. But officers sent out a mass alert to all desktop and notebook computers on the base’s servers and within a few hours, the youngster was found.

That alert was sent using software from AtHoc Inc., a young, up-and-coming company based in San Mateo, Calif., that specializes in mass notification products.

## Internet success

Guy Miasnik is one of the co-founders of the company. Born in Israel, he received his Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering at Israel’s Technion University, graduating summa cum laude, and served in the military, reaching the rank of captain.

In 1997, he came to the United States and earned his master’s in business administration at Harvard University. He was a founder of a company called Kinetica Ltd., a high-end engineering firm that specialized in Internet and communications solutions, which he subsequently sold to NetVision, a subsidiary of Elron Industries, Tel Aviv.

After that success, in 2000, Miasnik and two partners who had similar military command and control backgrounds decided to form a company that would provide instant alerts—not for military or emergency needs but for financial decisionmaking.

“When we embarked on the company, we decided to provide capabilities to organizations to deal with any type of notification, any type of real time information that needs to be disseminated to people, not just in the context of security. Actually, initially we started in the world of finance. In the world of finance, you have requirements for information. They need to know if the stock value has changed; they need to know about any news item that affects a portfolio. These are crucial business decisions that were worth a lot of money to many people where real time information was fundamental. So we



**Guy Miasnik**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer, AtHoc Inc.*

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built a platform that was very flexible and capable of providing a solution for an entire organization for multiple needs.”

The company turned out to be very successful from the start. “We were very successful for many organizations – companies like Boeing, which uses it today, and others. eBay used one of the first alerting technologies back in 2002 to inform people about auctions that they participated in and that were about to expire. They used technology from AtHoc—so that was rolled out to millions of people. That technology was the result of AtHoc, Microsoft and eBay working together.”

## High-profile incidents

Then came Sept. 11, 2001, and the need for instant notification solutions became obvious in both the military and civilian worlds. Miasnik and his partners oriented their business entirely to the safety and security markets, believing its products would be most useful in those realms.

AtHoc notifications have been used in a number of high-profile incidents. On Sept. 20, 2010, in a case of domestic violence, a

civilian employee at a convenience store in Fort Bliss, Texas, shot and killed two women before being killed himself. The colonel in command of the base first learned of the shooting when an AtHoc alert flashed on his computer. He received additional notification on his mobile phone.

On July 29, 2008, over 48,000 people on or near the University of California Los Angeles campus received pop-up, e-mail or instant message alerts within moments of a 5.4-magnitude earthquake and were told where to turn for additional information.

AtHoc alerts were also used to inform US Air Force personnel of the Haiti earthquake on Jan. 12, 2010, reducing their preparation time for deployment from days to hours.

Even where AtHoc has not been deployed, it has had a presence. There was no mass notification system in use at Fort Hood during the Nov. 5, 2009, shooting rampage by Army Maj. Nidal Hasan, and the commission investigating the incident recommended the Army examine an AtHoc system used by the US Navy.

## New frontiers

Miasnik is excited by the trends he sees in notification. Every type of business has some form of notification, usually something like a fire alarm or a siren. But as time goes on, that is proving insufficient; businesses want notifications that provide more information.

“Therefore, the entire industry is in the process of looking at IP [Internet protocol]-based solutions and an IP-based approach to expanding life safety solutions. This is what AtHoc has been doing for the last several years.”

In fact, the US Department of Defense has been pushing the National Fire Prevention Association to adopt a code that will allow IP-based fire alarms.

AtHoc has been growing at a rapid clip—70 percent per year, according to Miasnik. It is a privately held company, so revenue information is not available and it keeps its operations lean, employing only 60 people. But it may not stay that way for long. With new frontiers opening up and the need to keep people safe and informed, Miasnik sees unlimited growth ahead.

“The direction is very exciting now,” he observed. **HST**