

INNOVATION

A look at innovative organizations, concepts, products and people

Truth Is You Don't Want to Be Lying to This Investigative Tool

SECURITY: Touch Screen Device Works Quickly and Doesn't Need Administrator

■ By BRAD GRAVES

Phil Sprague has seen his share of liars in his career, having worked as a police officer and a criminal investigator.

In a second career as an inventor, Sprague developed a machine similar to a polygraph, which assesses whether someone might be hiding something.

Armed with a 2-year-old patent and a new partnership, Sprague is taking his technology to market under the name **Veracity Touch Screen Security Systems**. He is headed to market along with two generations of the Blue family, which is best known locally for building **General Atomics** into a defense contracting powerhouse.

Sprague, a former member of the Dallas police force, won't call Veracity's product a lie detector — but he does call it a very good way for authorities to determine who might need some further questioning. "Investigative focus tool" is the description that Sprague returned to several times during an interview.

Simply put, the machine is something to help "narrow the haystack to find the needle," Sprague said. It shows which people you probably won't have to worry about and which people need more scrutiny.

The Veracity test goes far more quickly than a polygraph test, taking only a couple of minutes. Polygraph tests can take

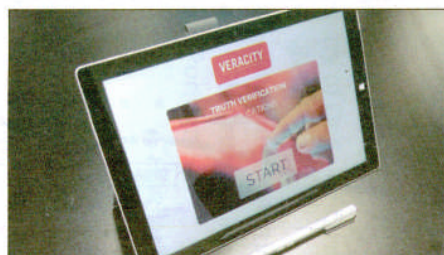


Photo courtesy of Veracity

Veracity Touch Screen Security Systems calls its new device "the next evolutionary step in a line of truth verification tools."

more than an hour and require a person trained to administer them.

A person takes the Veracity test himself by answering a series of questions on a touchscreen computer. The newest hardware that Veracity uses is a tablet computer running **Microsoft Corp.** (Nasdaq: MSFT)'s Windows operating system.

How does it work? The Veracity software detects the user's emotional response in answering a series of questions. It detects heightened emotion by analyzing slight variances in the way the person applies the stylus to the touch screen. At the end of the session, the Veracity software generates a score; Sprague would not say how the score is calculated, calling it a trade secret.

Among the factors the machine considered while computing the score is the time it takes a subject to answer a question, in milliseconds. The questionnaire is carefully sequenced to include innocuous questions as well as questions relevant to an investigation.

Veracity executives say their technology might be useful at airports or border crossings, to find smugglers, terrorists or people hiding weapons.

"It's got great potential in just so many different areas," said **Austin Blue**, the company's managing director. Austin's father, **Linden S. Blue**, is co-chairman of Veracity, which is housed in the General Atomics complex on Torrey Pines Mesa.

Indeed, the company sees markets in police, probation departments and the military.

The prospect of taking such a test might deter people from doing something bad in the first place, Sprague said.

Sprague is no stranger to the San Diego business community. The **Business Journal** interviewed him in September 1980, when he represented a company marketing a voice stress analyzer that used cassette tapes. Since then, technology has advanced many generations.

An important test for the Veracity touchscreen system came in late 2010, when Sprague's company deployed the system at the airport in the city of Lagos, Nigeria. It took 2,000 passengers at random and identified 75 associated with smuggling. When trying to evaluate a large number of people quickly, such a tool might be a helpful indicator of who needs the authorities' attention, Sprague said.

In 2012, Sprague received a patent for his "psychophysiological touch-screen stress analyzer." The inventor noted that the patent came through on Sept. 11 of that year — which he views as significant

VERACITY SECURITY SYSTEMS

CEO: Don Mealing

Revenue: Pre-revenue

No. of local employees: 10

Investors: The investor group includes Austin Blue, Linden S. Blue, Don Mealing and Phil Sprague

Headquarters: Torrey Pines Mesa

Year founded: 2013

What makes the company innovative: Created a patented technology that detects when people are under stress and may be lying

and likely more than a coincidence.

Sprague, who is the company's chief technical officer, said the Veracity system has been shown to produce almost the same results as a more-established test, the voice-stress analyzer. When testing drug users, the Veracity test produced results almost as good as chemical urinalysis, he said.

Veracity's offices contain examples of technology from previous decades. There is a polygraph with four arm-mounted pens that trace along a rolling piece of graph paper. And there is a voice stress analyzer equipped with a bulky cassette player from the 1970s.

Company officials say they are building on old technology and pushing ahead, calling their new test "the next evolutionary step in a line of truth verification tools."