Krowdsafe Mobile App Allows Crowds To Communicate With Security At Big Events

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Krowd is an app that connects people together based on geography; that is, if they are at the same place at the same time. Users sign into the app using the local WiFi, identify themselves by username, and are placed immediately in a group chat comprising anyone else at the location who has signed into the app.

An enhancement of the Krowd app, known as Krowdsafe, leverages the technology to achieve and promote security and safety. Specifically, Krowdsafe enables users to interact directly with security personnel at a public place to report any crimes or security infractions and to enable rapid response. Think of it as "crowdsourcing" security – the app provides more eyes and ears to keep a venue safer. In effect, it enables each of its users to be an extension of the security presence at a

venue or event. Krowdsafe improves crowd resilience.

> " "Crowdsourcing" security – the app provides more eyes and ears to keep a venue safer

Krowdsafe security app

Krowdsafe also opens a channel of communication for the security team to provide ad-hoc security information reminders or messages. Krowdsafe can be used at a variety of venues, including stadiums, transport hubs, office blocks, retail malls, college campus and major events organizers.

The app does not access identities, violate privacy, or track the movements of users. Other app users only know the information fellow users disclose. Still, group chats, one-on-one engagement, and other social media interactions can ensue, whether about a favorite soccer team or the excitement of a rock concert. The system fosters digital engagement that centers around a physical space. Krowdsafe applies those capabilities to promoting better security.

Enhancing crowd safety and management

The elements of Krowdsafe beat out 67 competitors to win the Defense & Security Accelerator Competition to Innovate Crowd Safety, launched by the UK Home office after terror events in 2017. Key areas of interest in the competition were to improve the detection of threats from explosives and weapons within a range of crowded places with high footfall and so reduce the chance of future attacks. Krowdsafe provides a prioritized, readily accessible and simple way for members of a crowd to communicate with a security team charged with keeping them safe. The £250,000 government award has helped the product move forward commercially at a faster pace.

Krowdsafe users can tap a red button, prominent on the Krowd app, that says "Report." They may then choose from a listing of common threat types – from suspicious activity or unattended activity to medical emergency or fire services. The list is configurable by venue and corresponds to any

specific threat models.

The list corresponds to the nature of any situation security wants to address, such as "anti-social behavior" at a <mark>soccer</mark> game. Users in the crowd can anonymously report racist chanting, for example. In a children's sporting event, the app can be used to facilitate lost-and-found children. If a child gets lost, a user can share a photo with the security team, who can alert the "public" (other Krowdsafe users) and find the child within minutes or seconds.

Encrypted identifier code

> **A user taps the "Report" button, selects an issue, and an alert goes directly to the security team**

A user taps the "Report" button, selects an issue, and an alert goes directly to the security team, who can respond because they have the encrypted identifier code from which the message came. For that point, the security team communicates one-on-one with the user, who can then choose to share their current location with the security team to facilitate response. (The "legitimate interest" of knowing the location negates any privacy concerns.) Once location is enabled, the security team can follow the precise positioning of threats on a map, using GPS and other technologies, or even on a three-dimensional digital map of a multi-story building.

Another security benefit of Krowdsafe is prevention. Event organizers and venue managers can promote the use of Krowdsafe on posters or in announcements throughout the venue. Additional eyes and ears are the equivalent of CCTV coverage on every inch of a venue and use of the system makes the environment more hostile to mischievous, malicious and/or terrorist activity. In effect, bad guys will go somewhere else.

Enhancement to Krowd app

Krowdsafe is an enhancement to the Krowd app, which has been around for a couple of years and

is available in app stores for iOS and Android. The app approximates in the digital world the experience of being a stranger in the crowd in the real world. Users can join a conversation based on their username, and then disclose to the crowd whatever they wish (or not). Event managers/organizers can promote hashtags to help identify others in the crowd (such as #ManUnited to identify fans of the same <mark>soccer</mark> team). In general, users can identify themselves (voluntarily) according to common interests using hashtags.

"*Krowd is a group chat that connects people together at the same place at the same time in a group, but without anyone having to disclose personal information,*" says Geoff Revill, Managing Director, Krowdthink Ltd. "*You have a digital presence in the same place with other people at the same time.*"

Wireless connectivity

> 66 Users connect initially into the system through WiFi, access to which serves to approximate presence at a venue

Users connect initially into the system through WiFi, access to which serves to approximate presence at a venue. Once someone signs in, information about them is merely a grouping of "hash" numbers, which are used to identify them as they communicate with others in the location. However, the "hashing" cannot be hacked to find a user's location, thus ensuring greater privacy.
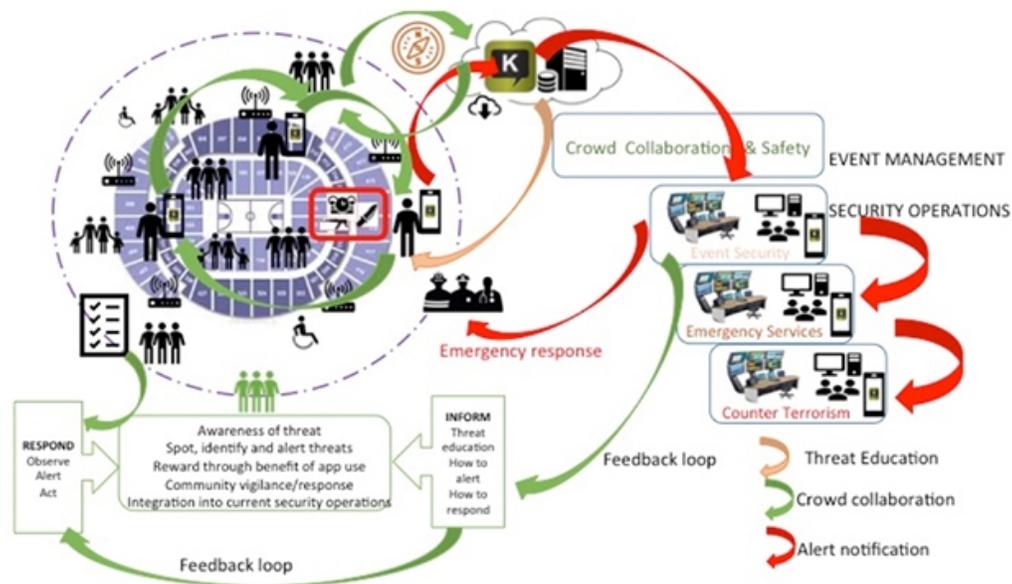
Because Krowd does not collect personal data (which is a revenue source for most social media companies), the company generates revenue by providing the service to venue owners who wish to interact with and manage a crowd.

Data security

Location data is considered sensitive under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and tracking locations can help to identify where someone lives, works, who they associate with, etc. By

not tracking location, Krowd avoids the related privacy issues. After initially signing in on WiFi, Krowd communications can also use 2G, 3G and other cellular networks in addition to WiFi.

Addressing privacy concerns is essential to encouraging involvement in the Krowd app, and in Krowdsafe. "*If you want people to participate in keeping the crowd safe, you have to get their trust and respect them, that's a building block behind the behavioral science,*" says Revill.

By not tracking location, Krowd avoids the related privacy issues

Privacy protection

Because Krowd users remain anonymous (except for the information they choose to share), user data is not collected (and/or sold or used for future marketing purposes). Krowd's paying customers are event venues and public places that provide the Krowd service and can promote their commercial messages or provide other information to their populations while on site.

Krowdsafe can provide immediate security benefits to a venue. Even if only 25 staff members use

the app in a given location, for example, that's 25 more sets of eyes and ears to help the security department. In a retail mall, if the staffs of 200 tenant businesses use the app, that's another 500 or so people watching out for security. Among the general public, use of the app can be promoted in customer newsletters, or by posting group discussions on big screens around a venue.

Wide marketing scope

> ❝ It enables members of a crowd to report any broken doors, water leaks or blocked toilets

Security is a secondary benefit for some Krowd users, who are drawn to the app because of marketing opportunities, such as the ability to provide discounts or promotional offers to customers while they are on site. The app also encourages social media interaction, while maintaining the venue's ability to "manage" the crowd by moderating any discussions.

The Krowd app also provides management benefits to a venue. For example, it enables members of a crowd to report any broken doors, water leaks or blocked toilets. In general, the app helps to promote a better brand experience for the customer.

Incident management

One of the UK government's concerns about Krowdsafe was its possible use by terrorists or other to cause incidents in a public venue. Think of the case of Olly Murs, a U.K. singer, whose mistaken tweets about hearing gunshots caused a brief panic at a department store on a busy shopping day. Might Krowd be uses similarly by a terrorist or other evil-doer to cause chaos or a distraction?

No, says Revill, who points to a higher level of control over content exchanged in Krowd versus Twitter, for example. The security team can censor content or limit its propagation. They can also disable or block a user from communicating on the app. Messages containing dangerous or troubling content, such as racist terms, can trigger alerts to enable security teams to respond

quickly.

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