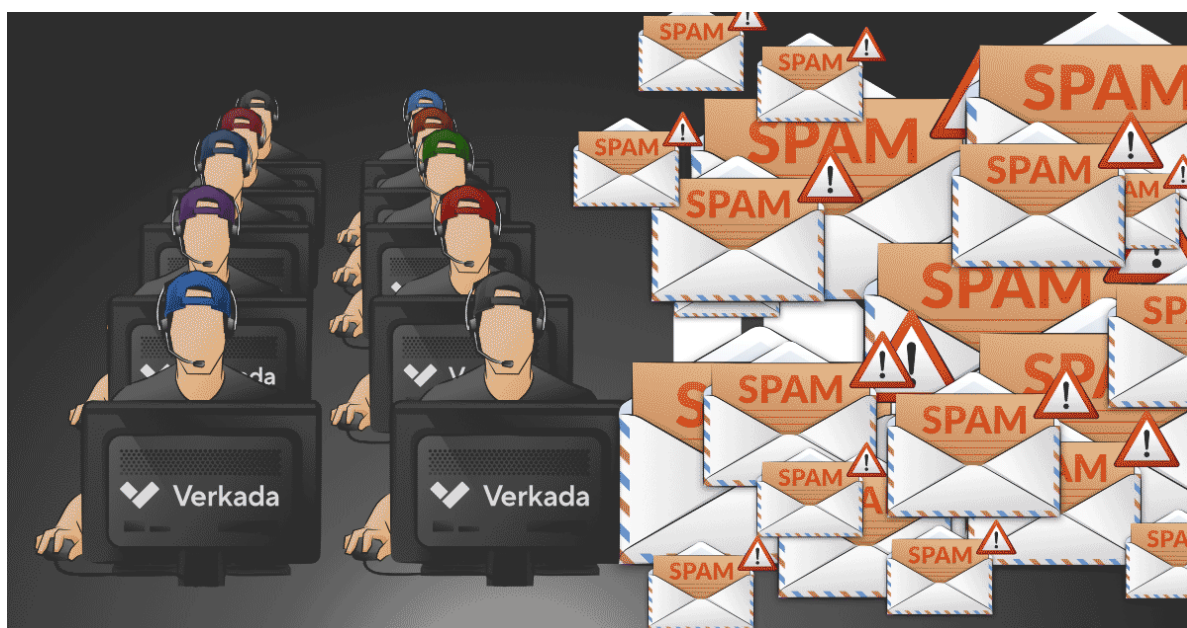




## Spam: Verkada Sends 10,000+ Unsolicited Emails to 23 School Districts

*Published on Nov 09, 2021*

An IPVM investigation reveals Verkada has sent more than 10,000 unsolicited commercial emails to 23 US school districts, regularly ignoring senior officials' requests to stop, while emailing dozens unrelated to security such as second grade and Life Skills teachers, assistants, elementary school principals, a nutrition specialist, and others.



This massive spam email operation raises ethical and legal concerns about the tactics the aggressive Silicon Valley tech startup has taken, shedding further light on Verkada practices that various school end users have complained strongly about (see ["Arrogant, Rude, and Relentless" - Verkada Sales Targeting End Users](#)).

Inside this report, we examine the breadth and depth of Verkada's junk email marketing campaign to these school districts. In the coming weeks, IPVM will publish further articles based on this database. Verkada declined to comment for this report.

### **IPVM Verkada Email Database**

Thanks to state public record laws, IPVM obtained over 14,000 emails across 23 school districts in 8 states over the past 3 months:

District	State	Emails Obtained	Students	Schools
Flagstaff Unified School District	AZ	142	9,665	16
San Diego Unified School District	CA	733	121,000	239
San Juan Unified School District	CA	839	39,750	64
Charter Oak Unified School District	CA	306	4,540	10
Oakland Unified School District	CA	364	35,489	80
Sarasota County Public Schools	FL	401	43,150	62
Leon County Public Schools	FL	3,269	34,000	57
Elgin Area School District U46	IL	142	39,000	58
Champaign Community Unit School District 4	IL	90	10,179	20
Evanston Township High District 202	IL	338	3,602	1
Rich Township High School District 227	IL	95	2,677	1
Arlington Heights School District 25	IL	123	5,500	9
Rockford School District 205	IL	249	28,194	44
Riverside School District 96	IL	11	1,725	5
Tupelo Public School District	MS	10	7,002	14
Pittsburgh Public Schools	PA	117	23,331	54
Reading School District	PA	65	19,178	19
Charleston County Public Schools	SC	2,678	49,000	88
Decatur Independent School District	TX	152	3,129	6
Dallas Independent School District	TX	3,942	155,861	230
Premont Independent School District	TX	147	665	2
North Hopkins Independent School District	TX	113	541	2
Leary Independent School District	TX	7	135	1
Total Emails		14,333		

A minority of the emails (less than 5%) represent auto-replies, emails touting Verkada from its partners, and certain districts which agreed to join a webinar or eventually did buy Verkada.

(IPVM omitted Chicago Public Schools for this calculation as the massive school system only allowed IPVM to obtain emails from 10 out of ~39,000 staff).

#### Estimate Of Total Emails: 1+ Million

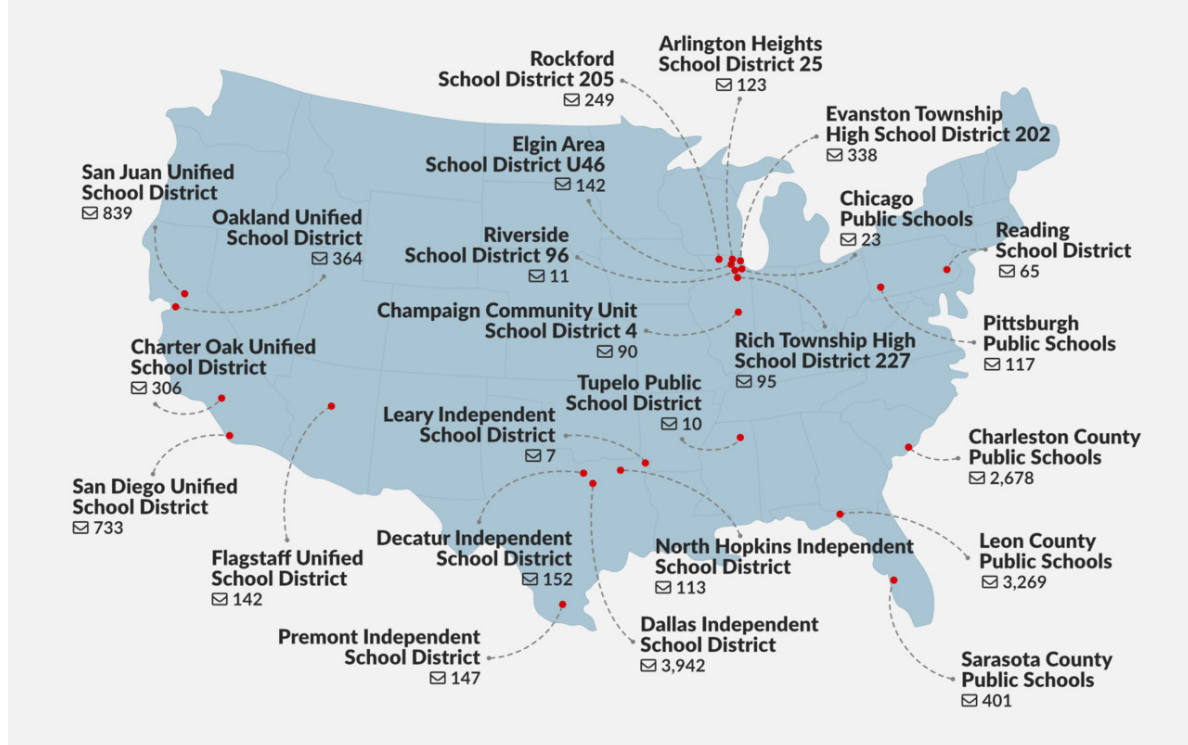
IPVM estimates that Verkada has sent over a million unsolicited commercial emails to US schools. From our sample, an average of 13.2 Verkada commercial emails was sent per school. Multiplying this average by [the US' 98,469 total public schools](#), this means Verkada may have realistically sent ~1.3 million marketing emails to US public school employees. This number is likely even higher due to omissions from the documents we received.

#### Method Explained

In order to be as representative as possible, IPVM sent information requests to small, medium, and large school districts in 8 states from across the US: California, Illinois, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. Of those 86 districts, 24 have responded with relevant documents so far.

## School Districts That Responded To Verkada Request

IPVM



Beyond size and location, the district themselves were chosen at random, i.e. IPVM did not target districts that were already Verkada customers. The period covered by the emails is from 2018 to mid-August/September 2021.

### 2021 Trend: Increased Targeting, Rise Of the 'MDR'

Initially, Verkada targeted districts with a few salespeople or simply by "Verkada Team" but since 2021 many are titled "Marketing Development Representative" (MDRs) on LinkedIn (though falsely identified in the emails as "Operations At Verkada"). For example, in 2018, only 7 separate Verkada accounts including "Verkada Team" [emailed South Carolina's Charleston County Public Schools district](#), e.g. on April 25 2018 alone, "Verkada Team" sent the same webinar invite to 164 of the district's employees.

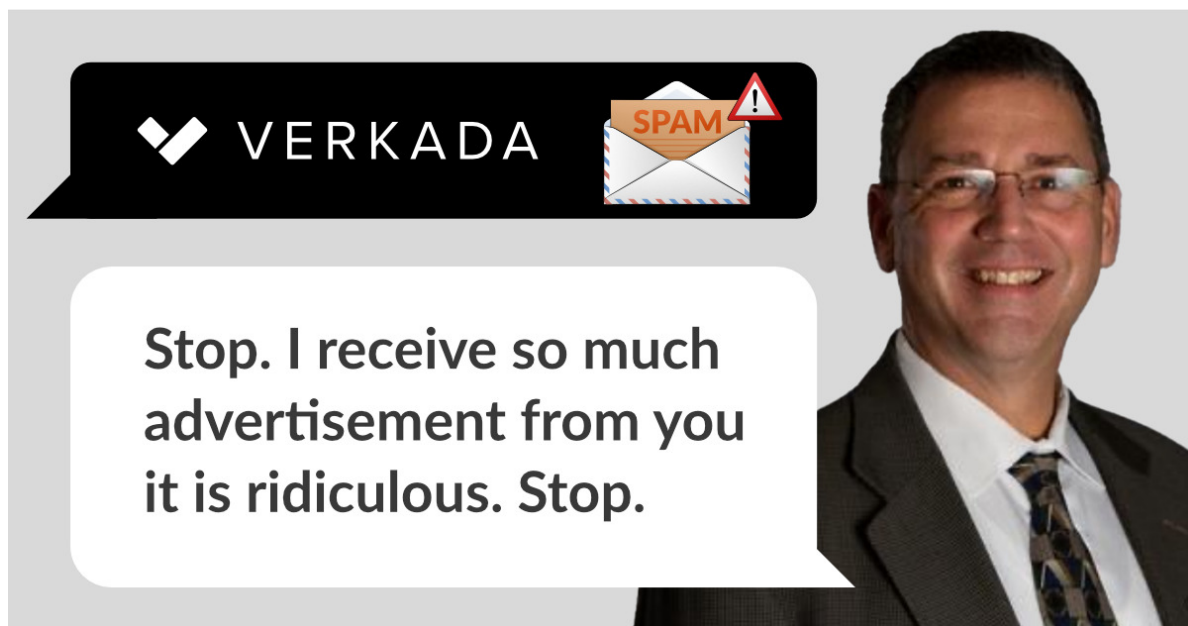
However, starting in 2019 until today, 30 separate Verkada employees have targeted the district. Starting in 2021 these have mostly been marketing people like [Ash Ganapathi](#), [Grant Miller](#), [Brad Ayres](#).

Similarly, a single high school in Evanston IL [received 338 emails in 2021](#) mostly from MDRs such as [Sam Moon](#), [Emily Ehlers](#), [Quinn Griffiths](#), [Ryan Talley](#), etc.

This trend makes sense given Verkada's aggressive hiring of sales staff, now at ~500 of its almost 1,000 employees, more than doubling in just 1 year per LinkedIn and up more than 8x [since its ~60 sales staff](#) in April 2019.

### Relentless Emailing: "I receive so much advertisement from you it is ridiculous. stop"

IPVM obtained [142 Verkada marketing emails](#) from Illinois' Elgin Area School District U-46. In September 2020, [John Heiderscheidt](#), U-46's Director of School Safety and Culture, replied to a Verkada marketing email about a COPS grant with "stop. I receive so much advertisement from you it is ridiculous. stop":



Verkada confirmed he was removed from their mailing list and Heiderscheidt replied that "there is a process" for becoming a vendor by registering with Business Services, urging "please don't contact me on linked-in either":

email: "[REDACTED]@u-46.org John Heiderscheidt"  
To: email: "[REDACTED]@verkada.com Alex Furuya"

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 6:03:40 PM Central Daylight Time

Thank you.

If you want to be a vendor in our district then contact our Business Services office at 847-888-5000;5014. There is a process.

Please don't contact me on linked-in either.

Thank you.

But Verkada's [enterprise account executive Kyle Bettencourt](#) (brother of [Global Sales VP Ryan](#)) persisted, emailing Heiderscheidt the day after, stating "apologies for the aggressive follow up" while touting Verkada's K12 solution:

## Verkada was told to stop, Verkada responded again **IPVM**



"John - apologies for the aggressive follow up, just wanted to ensure we had a chance to introduce you to our platform as your colleagues thought this would provide great value to the district."

—  VERKADA

The "your colleagues thought" line is notable since it relates to Verkada cold emailing numerous school staff unrelated to security or IT, trying to get those staff to introduce Verkada to those actually responsible for purchasing video surveillance.

The school's director replied that he has been "as polite as possible", re-iterating "you need to connect with our Business services department":

email: [REDACTED]@u-46.org John Heiderscheidt"  
To: email: [REDACTED]@verkada.com Kyle Bettencourt"

Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 12:49:47 PM Central Daylight Time

Kyle,

I have said this before as polite as possible. If I give you the time I will need to give all vendors equal time.

You need to connect with our Business services department and get logged in as a vendor. We just received a grant for cameras and expect a project to be released on RFP within the next 8 months.

Thank you.

On Thu, Sep 17, 2020 at 12:34 PM Kyle Bettencourt <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:

John - apologies for the aggressive follow up, just wanted to ensure we had a chance to introduce you to our platform as your colleagues thought this would provide great value to the district.

Even after this exchange, Verkada persisted in emailing different members of U-46 over a dozen times only for U-46 to reiterate their lack of interest on September 30, 2020 ("we're not interested"):



email: "[REDACTED]@u-46.org Kevin McKenzie"  
To: email: "[REDACTED]@verkada.com Lindsey Shultz"

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at 9:05:28 AM Central Daylight Time

Hi Lindsey,

I'm the individual who is in charge of Video Security with our School District.

We currently have a contract with a company who handles all of our security needs.

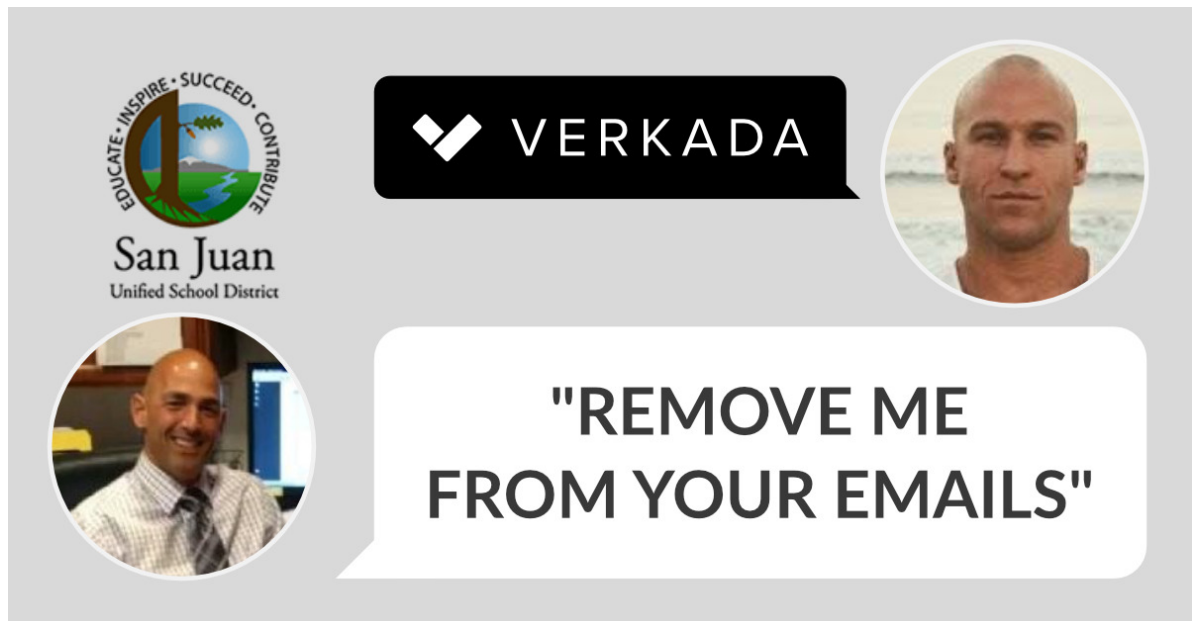
**We're not interested** in this product or services at this time.

Thanks,

Kevin McKenzie

**"REMOVE ME FROM YOUR EMAILS"**

Verkada is behind [839 marketing emails](#) to California's San Juan Unified School District, whose [COO Frank Camarda](#) replied in 2019 in all caps "REMOVE ME FROM YOUR EMAILS:"



A screencap of that response is shared below:

RE: Brief Video / Preventative Security for Schools



Frank Camarda  
To: Michael Tagliaferri

Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

**REMOVE ME FROM YOUR EMAILS**

**From:** Michael Tagliaferri <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2019 1:28 PM

**To:** Frank Camarda <[REDACTED]@sanjuan.edu>

**Subject:** Brief Video / Preventative Security for Schools

Hi Frank,

In response Verkada asked "could you point me in the right direction" while confirming Camarda had been removed:

Re: Brief Video / Preventative Security for Schools



Michael Tagliaferri <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>  
To: Frank Camarda

[Reply](#) [Reply All](#) [Forward](#) [More](#)

Thu 2/21/2019 4:37 AM

[Click here to download pictures](#). To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

Hi Frank,

Sorry to disturb you. I just removed you from my list, **could you point me in the right direction** for security at San Juan? I would really appreciate it.

Best,  
Michael

Michael Tagliaferri  
Account Executive  
925-708-6299  
[REDACTED]@verkada.com

On Wed, Feb 20, 2019 at 1:29 PM Frank Camarda <[REDACTED]@sanjuan.edu> wrote:

[REMOVE ME FROM YOUR EMAILS](#)

### "Please Remove My Email" To No Avail

Verkada sent [401 marketing emails](#) to Florida's Sarasota County Public Schools, including 8 to Garden Elementary Principal [Amy Archer](#) who replied in March 2019 "please remove my email from your list":

**From:** [Archer Amy](#)  
**To:** [Eduardo Silva](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Verkada webinar  
**Date:** Friday, March 15, 2019 9:00:03 AM

**Please remove my email from your list.**

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Eduardo Silva <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 15, 2019 8:02 AM  
**To:** Archer Amy  
**Subject:** Verkada webinar

Amy,

I know that sometimes people would rather gather information without speaking to someone. I want to point you to our [webinars page](#). Feel free to attend one of our weekly webinars to learn why our technology is the fastest growing Silicon Valley.

Please let me know if there are any questions I can answer or if there are any additional resources I can send.

Best,

However, Verkada persisted, emailing Archer three times in 2021, including "dropping a voicemail":

**From:** Ryan Pozivenec  
**To:** Archer Amy  
**Subject:** Reconnecting: Personalized Verkada walkthrough for Sarasota County Schools  
**Date:** Friday, June 4, 2021 1:44:06 PM

External Email - Be Suspicious of Attachments, Links, and Requests for Login Information

Hi Amy,

Just following up on my colleague's previous email to Sarasota County Schools -- tried dropping you a voicemail too, but looks like I couldn't connect.

You had spoken to us at Verkada in the past and wanted to reconnect with Sarasota County Schools if you had a few minutes soon.

We're doing some very neat things today leveraging AI/ML helping to modernize and simplify building security efforts, Amy (video security, door access)

Would love to pick your brain. What time works best next week to walk through the platform and explore a bit? Thanks Amy!

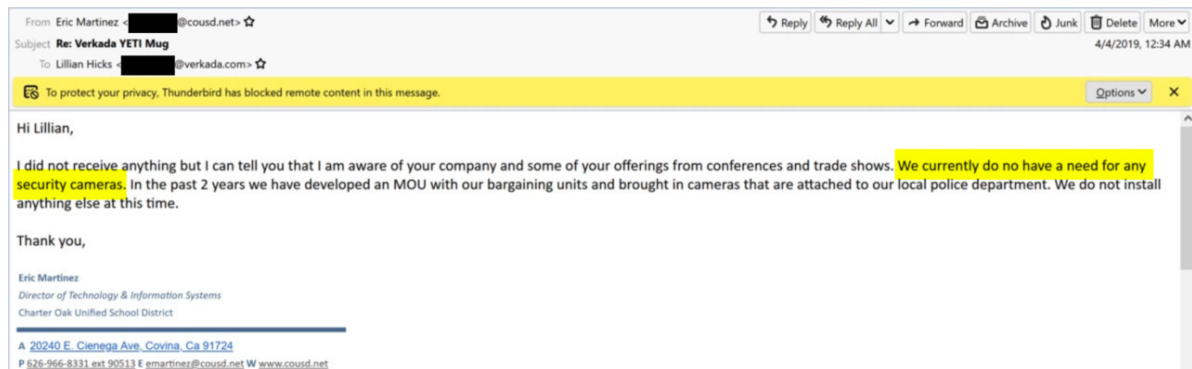
Ryan Pozivenec  
Operations at Verkada Inc.

If security does not pertain to you please click here: <https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fverkada.com%2Femailsettings&data=04%7C01%7C%40sarasotacountyschools.net%7C2c5a0a76809a4a6e924>

### Tech Director Emailed 50 Times, Only Responds Once

Verkada emailed California's Charter Oak Unified School District at least 306 times since 2018, including 50 emails to its tech director [Eric Martinez, the most out of any District employee](#); Verkada also mailed Martinez a MagLite flashlight.

However, [Martinez](#) only replied once, in April 2019, stating: "we currently do no [sic] have a need" for security cameras:



But Verkada emailed Martinez 18 times since then, to no reply. In August 2021, the District's security director [Amy Gierloff](#) told Verkada they had "gone with another contractor":

On Mon, Aug 16, 2021 at 2:33 PM Reisa Elden <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:  
Hi Amy,  
  
Thank you so much for the update. Quick question for you - would you be open to us putting in a competitive bid on your project? I would need to see the final scope and I can turn around a budget proposal in an hour. Buying cameras is a long term commitment to your safety and security strategy. We can share why our customers have chosen Verkada. Either way, I hope to connect in the future and wish you all the best with reopening this month.  
  
All the best,  
Reisa  
  
On Mon, Aug 16, 2021 at 12:13 PM Amy Gierloff <[REDACTED]@cousd.net> wrote:  
Hi Reisa,  
  
Unfortunately, our district has gone with another contractor for an extension security package and so we will not need to meet with you at this time.  
  
Thank you.  
Amy

But Verkada still tried to push, asking "would you be open to us putting in a competitive bid on your projects?" to which Gierloff replied "No":



From: Amy Gierloff <[REDACTED]@cousd.net> ☆  
 Subject: Re: Amy: Camera drop off?  
 To: Reisa Elden <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> ☆

8/17/2021, 4:36 AM

To protect your privacy, Thunderbird has blocked remote content in this message. Options X

No - they are done with the process and work has started.

On Mon, Aug 16, 2021 at 2:33 PM Reisa Elden <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:  
 Hi Amy,

Thank you so much for the update. Quick question for you - would you be open to us putting in a competitive bid on your project? I would need to see the final scope and I can turn around a budget proposal in an hour. Buying cameras is a long term commitment to your safety and security strategy. We can share why our customers have chosen Verkada. Either way, I hope to connect in the future and wish you all the best with reopening this month.

All the best,  
 Reisa

## Persists Emailing Despite New Camera System

Verkada emailed California's Oakland Unified School District 364 times, including 70 emails to [executive technology director Colleen Calvano](#), but she replied only once in June 2021 that "we are not interested at this time as we have just rolled out a new camera system":

From: COLLEEN CALVANO <[REDACTED]@ousd.org> ☆  
 Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Verkada camera trial for Oakland Unified School District  
 To: Lauren Spears <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> ☆


To protect your privacy, Thunderbird has blocked remote content in this message.

Hi Lauren,

We are not interested at this time as we have just rolled out a new camera system.

Colleen

Colleen L. Calvano, M.Ed  
 Executive Director, Technology Services  
 Oakland Unified School District  
 1011 Union St  
 Oakland, CA 94607  
 Office: 510-879-2202



[Best Practices for Securing Your Virtual Classroom](#)  
[Best Practices for Using Zoom on a Chromebook](#)  
[How to Change Your Password Online](#)

On Mon, Jun 21, 2021 at 12:18 PM Lauren Spears <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:  
 Hi Colleen,

Circling back -- as I mentioned in my previous email a few days ago, we think we could help centralize and streamline video security and access control for Oakland Unified School District.

However, Verkada and its partners emailed Calvano 10 times afterwards regardless, touting YETI mugs and gift cards:

Subject	Correspondents	Date
☆ [EXTERNAL] CITE: Current vape detector opinions/guidance?	Darin Cooper via California IT in Education	8/26/2021, 1:50 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Protecting Families and Children in Oakland USD (YETI Rambler included)	Jill Campbell	8/25/2021, 6:51 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Colleen, How are you Securing your Community? (Gift Card for Attending)	Jill Movahedi	8/19/2021, 7:57 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Colleen: Verkada Announces Revamped VXS2 Viewing Station	Verkada Team	8/18/2021, 2:01 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Colleen: Verkada Announces License Plate of Interest Alerts and Higher Accuracy Detection	Verkada Team	8/13/2021, 1:15 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Increasing Security at Oakland USD (YETI Rambler Included)	Jill Movahedi	8/13/2021, 12:20 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Colleen: Verkada Announces Touchless Entry (BLE) & Tailgating Detection	Verkada Team	8/11/2021, 2:38 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] -- Still the best video surveillance solution on the planet	Christian Grogan	8/6/2021, 6:38 AM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Sorry you missed the webinar Colleen!	Brad Ayres	6/29/2021, 9:48 PM
☆ [EXTERNAL] Weekend Plans?	Christian Rios	6/25/2021, 12:59 AM

## Persists Despite Told "Not In The Market" Twice

Verkada sent 152 unsolicited emails to Texas' Decatur Independent School District, whose tech director Troy Bagwell told Verkada that "we are not in the market" in February 2019:



TROY BAGWELL <[REDACTED]@decaturisd.us>

Matt Zielinski

Re: Follow-up

Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

Thank you Matt. We have a system in place that is pretty new and **we are not in the market** for replacing it at this time.

Troy Bagwell

On Tue, Oct 20, 2020 at 12:48 PM Matt Zielinski <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:

Hi Troy,

Hope all is well with you. Jadie Matthew showed interest in our security solutions and wanted to follow up with you as the Director of IT. Would you be interested in a call to walk you through our platform?

Best,  
Matt

--

Matt Zielinski  
Texas Territory Manager | VERKADA  
650 781 9008

Bagwell repeated to Verkada in October 2020 that "we are not in the market" but Verkada persisted, emailing District staff over two dozen times afterwards, well into this year. Decatur never emailed back expressing interest.

### Emailing Staff Unrelated To Security

Verkada [emailed](#) second grade teacher [Tatia Williams](#) of Charleston County Public Schools over two dozen times from 2019 to 2021 to no response, e.g. in June 2021:

**From:** [Verkada Team](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]@charleston.k12.sc.us  
**Subject:** Tatia, Wednesday's Intrusion Webinar @ 1pm ET / 10am PT  
**Date:** Monday, June 28, 2021 3:02:11 PM

---

Hi Tatia,

I would like to reconnect about Verkada's exciting announcement, in case you missed my last message.

Last Tuesday, Verkada launched our Alarms product, which combines intrusion alerts with 24/7 professional monitoring. Alongside a new suite of intrusion devices, Alarms can seamlessly leverage our video security, access control and environmental sensors to trigger alerts and provide video verification to reduce expensive false alarms and give you peace of mind. We would love to have you join our upcoming webinar Wednesday, June 30 at 1pm ET / 10am PT to learn more.

Please RSVP here: <https://www.verkada.com/intrusion-webinar>

For Illinois' Evanston Township High School, [Verkada emailed](#) Taylor Dante, a [Nutrition Services Specialist](#) at least twice:

**From:** Clay Cooledge <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 20, 2021 12:10 PM  
**To:** Taylor Dante  
**Subject:** Any direction is appreciated

Hi Taylor,

I've reached out a few times as I was wondering if you were the right person to chat with regarding campus safety / new technology at Evanston Township High School (IL)?

Verkada works with over 1,300 similar school districts to enhance security at scale via hybrid-cloud technology and wanted to see how to get this on your radar.

Happy to chat when you have availability for a quick screen-share / intro call!

Talk soon,  
Clay

Sent from my iPhone

Clay Cooledge  
Verkada

If this does not pertain to you, please let me know [here](#)

Also for Evanston Township High, [Verkada has emailed](#) Darlene Gordon, a [teacher of Business, Public Safety and Life Skills](#) in June 2021:

**From:** Ryan Talley <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 4, 2021 12:50 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@eths.k12.il.us  
**Subject:** Reconnecting: Personalized Verkada walkthrough for Evanston Township High School (IL)

Hi Darlene,

Just following up on my colleague's previous email to Evanston Township High School (IL) -- tried dropping you a voicemail too, but looks like I couldn't connect.

You had spoken to us at Verkada in the past and wanted to reconnect with Evanston Township High School (IL) if you had a few minutes soon.

We're doing some very neat things today leveraging AI/ML helping to modernize and simplify building security efforts, Darlene (video security, door access/badging, sensors...) and I would love to share how we have changed and improved since Evanston Township High School (IL) last spoke to us.

Would love to pick your brain. What time works best next week to walk through the platform and explore a bit? Thanks Darlene!

Ryan Talley  
Operations at Verkada Inc.

If security does not pertain to you please click here: <https://verkada.com/emailsettings>

Verkada emailed California's Oakland Unified School District facilities director [Kenya Chatman](#) 27 times, who never responded until January 2021 when she said "Not my department to handle cameras":

From: Kenya Chatman <[REDACTED]@ousd.org> ☆  
Subject: Re: Upgrading video surveillance for Oakland Unified School District  
To: Marianna Rivera <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> ☆

**Not my department to handle cameras.**

On Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 8:31 AM Marianna Rivera <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:  
Hi Kenya,  
  
I'd love nothing more than 15 minutes of your time to better understand your pain points and share some ways Verkada is helping other schools search, view and save footage with up to 365 days of uninterrupted footage.  
  
How's your schedule Friday for a demo?  
  
Thank you,  
Marianna

**MARIANNA RIVERA | VERKADA**  
Associate Account Executive  
2019 Forbes AI 50: America's Most Promising AI Companies  
(619) 362-0541 | [www.verkada.com](http://www.verkada.com)


While Verkada itself appears to have stopped emailing Chatman, she was still contacted eight times in August 2021 by Verkada partner [ITMGMT](#) offering Amazon gift cards and a YETI Rambler to attend Verkada webinars:

EXTERNAL: Securing Facilities at Oakland Unified School District (Amazon Gift Card for Attending)	Courtney Durler	8/31/2021, 4:07 AM
EXTERNAL: Securing Facilities at Oakland Unified School District (Amazon Gift Card for Attending)	Courtney Durler	8/31/2021, 4:07 AM
EXTERNAL: Kenya, How are you Securing your Community? (Gift Card for Attending)	Adrian Anderson	8/24/2021, 7:35 AM
EXTERNAL: Kenya, How are you Securing your Community? (Gift Card for Attending)	Adrian Anderson	8/24/2021, 7:35 AM
EXTERNAL: Kenya, How are you Securing your Community? (Gift Card for Attending)	Adrian Anderson	8/20/2021, 7:39 AM
EXTERNAL: Kenya, How are you Securing your Community? (Gift Card for Attending)	Adrian Anderson	8/20/2021, 7:39 AM
EXTERNAL: Increasing Security at (YETI Rambler Included)	Adrian Anderson	8/17/2021, 3:31 AM
EXTERNAL: Increasing Security at (YETI Rambler Included)	Adrian Anderson	8/17/2021, 3:31 AM

In 2018, Verkada emailed Christine Morgan, a biology [teacher](#) at Texas' Decatur Independent School District:

Re: Campus surveillance update

 Scott Miller <[REDACTED]@verkada.com>  
To: [REDACTED]@decaturisd.us

 Reply  Reply All  Forward ...

Tue 12/11/2018 12:22 AM

 Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

Thanks christine.

On Mon, Dec 10, 2018 at 7:00 AM CHRISTINE MOGAN <[REDACTED]@decaturisd.us> wrote:

Scott,  
I have forwarded your email on to Chris Mogan for his review.

Thanks,  
Christine

On Mon, Dec 10, 2018 at 8:11 AM Scott Miller <[REDACTED]@verkada.com> wrote:

Hi Chris,

My name is Scott Miller and I wanted to reach out to you directly as I have been working with many schools to help them improve campus security. I wanted to see if you have any time next week to discuss our hybrid-cloud cameras, which require zero NVR/DVR/on-prem servers or thick clients.

Our system stores 30, 60, 90 or even 120 days of footage locally on the camera while operating at 5-20 kbps per camera, allowing you to access your footage from anywhere, any device, at any time in a secure, browser-based UI.

We have had great success in the K-12 industry with districts like Steamboat Springs, Yuma Arizona, Wauwatosa and over 50 more that have standardized Verkada throughout their districts. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to introduce you and your organization to the Verkada technology.

If you are the appropriate person, what does your calendar look like? If not, who is the appropriate person I should reach out to?

Thanks in advance,

Scott Miller  
Account Executive - Verkada  
d: (650) 781-5212  
m: (925) 984-4176

In that exchange, Verkada achieved what they wanted, which was the biology teacher forwarding the email to [Chris Mogan](#), a high school principal.

In 2020 Verkada also emailed Decatur ISD's Lana Coffman, [principal](#) of Young Elementary School:

Hey Lana,

In this unprecedented time, secure remote access to all locations on campus has become incredibly important to ensure the administration manages safety on any device, even from home.

In our upcoming webinar "Evaluating Your School's Video Security Strategy" we'll share 3 ways schools are evaluating video security effectiveness and are introducing new technology to overcome common CCTV NVR/DVR system challenges and new regulations.

I would love for you to join us, please register to RSVP (I'll send you a recording if you can't make it):

<http://go.verkada.com/ldr/CPYCrTYD7YSLwdrb86YFkonXR8vHogqd8URUmjnlcX3ABJub8DXvYrMln8rTKoy2VG-A57mzwXQaYD5kvc8C7XKT04VzcmNZUcmYwOX01487R88mZ5G8dusJ2CwxfOrGr5rin3NncseG0wLqfaoVmkfHeJ9NKVChECM4P8Uk-/Jut10006119060Y0137eh8K50>

If you do decide to attend, we'll also be mailing you a Verkada MagLite flashlight (just a little thank you from us)!

Thanks Lana,

Alex Furuya  
Operations Manager Verkada Inc.

Not interested in video security: [https://verkada.com/emailsettings/?utm\\_email=\[REDACTED\]@decaturnisd.us](https://verkada.com/emailsettings/?utm_email=[REDACTED]@decaturnisd.us)

For California's [Charter Oak School District](#), Verkada emailed numerous staffers not in charge of procurement, from IT techs to assistant principals to executive assistants:

- 13 emails to [Ivan Ayro](#), director of adult & career technical education
- 21 emails to [Gregory Frotton](#), IT Technician
- 26 emails to [Fred Gonzales](#), IT Technician
- 12 emails to [Erin Villaverde](#), Assistant Principal
- 12 emails to [Earvin Santos](#), IT Technician
- 13 emails to [Lisa Raigosa](#), Alternative School Principal
- 4 emails to [Lori Mikesell](#), Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
- 13 emails to [Lori Drake](#), Principal at Charter Oak High
- Verkada also emailed former Superintendent Michael Hendricks three times in August 2021 despite [Hendricks resigning in 2019](#).

### Ethical, Legal Questions Raised

These aggressive mass email campaigns raise legal concerns as the US FTC, under 2003's [CAN-SPAM rule](#), regulates email marketing with mandates like "honor opt-out requests promptly". Ethically, the mass emails also raise concerns around wasting public officials' time by filling up inboxes with mass emails and contacting numerous staffers, creating potential logistical hurdles.

In the coming weeks, IPVM will be publishing more articles based on these emails and the specific issues they raise.

### Verkada Declines Comment

Verkada's spokesperson [Linden Zakula](#), senior VP at PR firm Risa Heller Communications, [who "specializes in crisis communications"](#) was given a preview of our concerns and findings but responded:

We will not be sending a response. Thanks.



## Comments (39)

John Honovich | IPVM |

Charles, Carl, great work!



Verkada is part of a troubling Silicon Valley trend where tech bros or, in fairness to [Verkada's Chairman "sales athletes"](#), bombard prospects and even people who are not prospects until they get a sale.

This is the tech bro equivalent of a guy hitting on every girl in school over and over again. "Wanna? Wanna? Wanna? No. But how about now? Now?"

It's not innovative and I don't think it's ethical. And as we covered in [Verkada - Deceptive "Prevent \\$100,000 Tailgating" Campaign](#), there are numerous concerns with their practices conflicting with FTC rules.

From speaking with various sales executives, Verkada's bombarding tactic is shocking even to them and something that has conventionally not been done. But Verkada clearly does not care. And it may very well be that this generation of Silicon Valley tech bros, much like how they gamed social media and punished the public, will break prospecting unless and until the government steps in and punishes such behavior.

---

#### Undisclosed Manufacturer #1

Fine upstanding citizens

---

#### Undisclosed Integrator #2

Maybe I'm a little dense here. Since these appear to come from verkada.com, why didn't these frustrated IT guys place them in a spam filter?

---

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Undisclosed Integrator #2

Verkada sends them to all sorts of people, only a minority of them are "IT guys". Their was [a Reddit thread where an IT person talked](#) about doing that:

They have hounded me for years and my requests to them to stop went ignored. When they started spamming my entire admin team and board members, I flagged all email from their domain to be quarantined.

---

**Clint Hays**

In reply to John Honovich

Domain wide filtering is brutal, but it could be what's needed in situations like this.

---

**Undisclosed #5**

In reply to Clint Hays

We should go into business together, and provide "Verkada Domain Filtering" for schools.

---

**Daniel Lewkovitz**

In reply to John Honovich

I flagged all email from their domain to be quarantined.

Fast forward to years from now when some rube implements Verkada and nobody can work out why none of the alert emails ever seem to arrive....

---

**Undisclosed End User #4**

In reply to Undisclosed Integrator #2

I think I can elaborate a little on this.

To get the full story, someone would have to understand the RFP/bid process that's required when purchasing big rollouts like Verkada sells in a school system.

From what I know: essentially if IT blocks their domain and maintenance puts a bid out for access control, Verkada may try to contact for a bid but won't reach anyone. This could essentially allow Verkada to claim they weren't given a fair shake, which is what the rfp process should provide, and cause the entire process to be redone.

---

**Shannon Davis** IPVMU Certified

I thought the CAN-SPAM Act was supposed to help alleviate this?

Do you use email in your business? The CAN-SPAM Act, a law that sets the rules for commercial email, establishes requirements for commercial messages, gives recipients the right to have you stop emailing them, and spells out tough penalties for violations.

Despite its name, the CAN-SPAM Act doesn't apply just to bulk email. It covers all commercial messages, which the law defines as "any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service," including email that promotes content on commercial websites. The law makes no exception for business-to-business email. That means all email – for example, a message to former customers announcing a new product line – must comply with the law.

Each separate email in violation of the CAN-SPAM Act is subject to penalties of up to \$43,792, so non-compliance can be costly. But following the law isn't complicated. Here's a rundown of CAN-SPAM's main requirements:

1. **Don't use false or misleading header information.** Your "From," "To," "Reply-To," and routing information – including the originating domain name and email address – must be accurate and identify the person or business who initiated the message.
  2. **Don't use deceptive subject lines.** The subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message.
  3. **Identify the message as an ad.** The law gives you a lot of leeway in how to do this, but you must disclose clearly and conspicuously that your message is an advertisement.
  4. **Tell recipients where you're located.** Your message must include your valid physical postal address. This can be your current street address, a post office box you've registered with the U.S. Postal Service, or a private mailbox you've registered with a commercial mail receiving agency established under Postal Service regulations.
  5. **Tell recipients how to opt out of receiving future email from you.** Your message must include a clear and conspicuous explanation of how the recipient can opt out of getting email from you in the future. Craft the notice in a way that's easy for an ordinary person to recognize, read, and understand. Creative use of type size, color, and location can improve clarity. Give a return email address or another easy Internet-based way to allow people to communicate their choice to you. You may create a menu to allow a recipient to opt out of certain types of messages, but you must include the option to stop all commercial messages from you. Make sure your spam filter doesn't block these opt-out requests.
  6. **Honor opt-out requests promptly.** Any opt-out mechanism you offer must be able to process opt-out requests for at least 30 days after you send your message. You must honor a recipient's opt-out request within 10 business days. You can't charge a fee, require the recipient to give you any personally identifying information beyond an email address, or make the recipient take any step other than sending a reply email or visiting a single page on an Internet website as a condition for honoring an opt-out request. Once people have told you they don't want to receive more messages from you, you can't sell or transfer their email addresses, even in the form of a mailing list. The only exception is that you may transfer the addresses to a company you've hired to help you comply with the CAN-SPAM Act.
  7. **Monitor what others are doing on your behalf.** The law makes clear that even if you hire another company to handle your email marketing, you can't contract away your legal responsibility to comply with the law. Both the company whose product is promoted in the message and the company that actually sends the message may be held legally responsible.
- 

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Shannon Davis

Yes but the problem is it is rarely enforced and sellers like Verkada are aware that the chances of actually being punished are low.

---

**Shannon Davis** IPVMU Certified

In reply to John Honovich

Perhaps if more of these school districts and all the others bombarded by their emails would visit the FTC's complaint site then maybe some action would be taken. Of course they probably don't have the time in their day to do this either.

[ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/ReportFraud)

---

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Shannon Davis

It's a good idea! It's not something I hear regularly discussed so I am guessing most people don't think of doing that.

---

**Undisclosed End User #3**

In reply to Shannon Davis

I'll do this with all their emails and phone calls from now on. As far as I know, I'm the only one that they contact at my company. I have participated in their webinars in the past at a previous employer but not here.

They apparently don't keep track of how many Yeti's/flahslights/radios/gift cards they send out to a person because I had quite the haul until my wife started selling them all. Maybe if we all participated in five webinars we could exhaust their marketing budget!

---

**Shannon Davis** IPVMU Certified

In reply to Shannon Davis

You know what is "Unhelpful" is the constant bombarding of spam emails everyday!!!!

---

**Brian Karas** Pelican Zero |

First, I will state the obvious, which is that Verkada has been successful, broadly speaking, with their marketing approach.

However, I think they are quickly running up against the limits of what I'll call "Silicon Valley" style marketing into the security industry. The average buyer/decision maker for security products in larger accounts despises this kind of behavior. You cannot "growth hack" a security company using the methods you read about on LinkedIn and in various HubSpot-y forums and newsletters.

I'm not going to get overly in depth here, in order to keep this comment brief, but successfully scaling security companies is about building trust in your customer/potential customer. It's not about A/B testing emails, highly engineered text and catch phrases (eg: "Your colleagues thought..."), or approaches like that. These methods can certainly help, and should not be totally ignored, but they're not the primary strategy.

IMO, Verkada is getting to the point that they are going to wind up with these organizations just blocking all email from the verkada.com domain.

---

**Hans Kahler** Eagle Eye Networks |

In reply to Brian Karas

I keep this comment brief

Given this was from Karas - it's the most amazing thing I've seen all day

(of course the day is young)

---

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Brian Karas

I think they are quickly running up against the limits of what I'll call "Silicon Valley" style marketing into the security industry.

Are you sure? Exhibit A for the defense:



**Idan Koren** • 3rd+

Vice President of Marketing (Head of Marketing) at V...

Reshared from Verkada • 1mo •

We're quintupling down our hiring in Salt Lake City. Learn more about how you can join **Verkada** on: [verkada.com/careers](https://verkada.com/careers)



**Verkada** is Growing - Join Our Team in SLC

[youtube.com](https://youtube.com)

From Vivint doorknockers to Verkada inside phone sales....

Related, LinkedIn reports 70 Verkada employees in Austin and approaching 50 in SLC:

### Where they live

+ Add

866 | United States



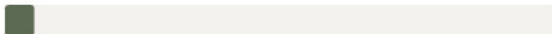
579 | San Francisco Bay Area



70 | Austin, Texas Area



46 | Greater Salt Lake City Area



As for:

You cannot "growth hack" a security company using the methods you read about on LinkedIn and in various HubSpot-y forums and newsletters.

Evidently, Verkada is testing out this hypothesis.

Related, Verkada is going to continue to expand horizontally, e.g., they will soon announce / release a visitor management system:

## Product Keynote with Verkada CEO Filip Kaliszan

Wednesday, Nov 17 2021 10:00AM PT / 1:00PM ET

Join thousands of customers in our first product launch keynote address held by Verkada's CEO, Filip Kaliszan.

Be the first to get a look at Verkada's recent updates to existing video security, access control and alarms product lines as well as a live walkthrough of Verkada's new visitor management product, Verkada

So maybe they only get 2% or 5% or 10% or whatever small fraction of customers to respond to them, but they are going to virtually all of their "building OS" spending from video to alarms to access to HVAC to A/V to visitor management system, etc. Thoughts?

---

**Brian Karas** Pelican Zero |

In reply to John Honovich

| Are you sure?

Definitely not "sure", and there can be a bit of a lag between alienating a significant part of your addressable market and that actually reflecting in pipeline.

| Related, LinkedIn reports 70 Verkada employees in Austin and approaching 50 in SLC:

I'm not sure what to take from that in context of Verkada potentially hitting a growth wall. A big part of their strategy and logic appears to revolve around trying to hire through the problem. Add enough warm bodies on phones, and it must contribute to growth, right? What's impossible to know from the outside is the ratio of new hires to actual new revenue growth. With the kind of VC-backing they are taking, and what I would imagine is/was their pitch to investors, I would expect them to continue to hire even if every single security buyer banded against them right now.

---

**Undisclosed Integrator #6**

In reply to Brian Karas

| there can be a bit of a lag

Depending on how big a lag there is and how fast you move, there can be a lot of money to be made there.

But what about recurring revenue. Sure, you're getting hated by your non customers, but since this is HaaS... Do you care? If you get enough customers that aren't willing to rip it all out, maybe you don't need to care.

Step 1: build something moderately interesting

Step 2: aggressively sell it to gain a foothold in the market

Step 3: watch the cash flow in

Step 4: get bought and move to Cancun

OR

Step 4: temporarily fire all the sales people, rebrand as Verkada 2.0, spend a year or two developing a NEW line of products and then return to step 2



---

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Undisclosed Integrator #6

Depending on how big a lag there is and how fast you move, there can be a lot of money to be made there.

But what about recurring revenue. Sure, you're getting hated by your non customers, but since this is HaaS... Do you care?

I second #6's point here. Maybe Verkada assumes their customers love their offering but even if they do not, [they know the reality of lock-in](#). If a school district buys 300 Verkada cameras with 5 year [nonrefundable] licenses, even if they are unhappy with it, what are they going to do? Throw that all away and start over? The economics of lock-in make that very difficult.

That logic reinforces why a blitzkrieg lightning sales expansion makes economic sense. Get as many users in as quickly as possible, get them locked in as deeply as possible (video, access, intrusion, visitor management system, etc.)

It will be interesting to see what Verkada does in the next few years, what they tell employees is IPO but going public would bring a vast amount of more scrutiny to them and force them to run this for even longer. My gut feel is that they will push as hard as they can for as long as they can, try to pursue an IPO and use that for leverage to get a giant company to buy them out before that. Then whatever giant company acquires them will deal with this and will most certainly clean up the practices.

---

#### **Undisclosed Integrator #8**

In reply to John Honovich

Nothing stop Verkada from "opening" cameras for integration a few years later.

---

**John Honovich** IPVM |

In reply to Undisclosed Integrator #8

Agreed, they could open up but why would they, if they resisted this long, why would they do so later?

Compare to [Rhombus Makes Secret Deals Not To Take Select Customers Hostage](#)

---

**Brian Karas** Pelican Zero |

In reply to Undisclosed Integrator #6

But what about recurring revenue. Sure, you're getting hated by your non customers, but since this is HaaS... Do you care?

Yes, I completely agree. In theory you could lock in a bunch of customers, cut sales and marketing spend way back and live off the RMR for a while until you figure out a pivot. It's an extreme example, but the point is unlike a traditional 1-and-done type of sale, the RMR model gives you a pretty predictable allowance, and of course also drives up valuation much more than the more traditional transactional sales.

Also, Verkada's expansion to other products is logical in this case. Once you've got a bunch of locked-in customers, odds are you can convince a lot of them to double down on that decision with additional products and subscriptions.

---

#### **Undisclosed End User #4**

I've commented this before- but its worth saying again here.

I work for a small school district, video security is one of my purviews. One of my colleagues was targeted by Verkada and took the bait. He pestered me for weeks and even brought one of their salespeople on site to schmooze me.

The only way I was able to cut contact with them was to get on a zoom call and essentially read them their company history. From the fake titles to the sexual harassment and spying on end user video feeds. I ended the call by asking them to never contact anyone in our system again.

To my knowledge they have left us alone. They haven't even made contact to provide return shipping for their demo equipment they left!

I absolutely despise this company and the way they handle things. If they find success in this industry, others will adopt these unethical tactics. People are not informed enough about their awful history and predatory business model to know to stay away- please spread the word!!

---

**Undisclosed End User #10**

In reply to Undisclosed End User #4

They sell buy sucking suckers. Great way to do business. Go in the back door and just start selling your stuff.

---

**Chris Smith**

The excessive marketing strategies in use today are going to come toppling down. This might be the start of it. It isn't wise to anger the education sector.

---

**Brian Karas** Pelican Zero |

In reply to Chris Smith

Totally agree. Those marketing techniques work when your addressable audience is huge and you can afford to burn a large portion of it, or when your product is a network-effect kind of thing (eg: Facebook) and people will ultimately join under duress and fear of missing out on pics/events/updates/etc.

---

**Sonny Tai** Actuate |

In reply to Brian Karas

What network effects do security cameras have?

---

**Brian Karas** Pelican Zero |

In reply to Sonny Tai

They don't, that was my point.

---

**Sonny Tai** Actuate |

In reply to Brian Karas

Ah good to go - went over my head 😊

---

**Undisclosed End User #4**

In reply to Chris Smith

While true, they already have managed to get a strong foothold in education.

They peppered us with recommendations from other school systems. Lucky for us, Verkadas reputation preceded them. We knew to steer clear, but other systems will see the hundreds of other school system 'big wigs' that recommend their

products.

---

#### Undisclosed #7

it appears to me that the only (potentially) effective response to a Verkada sales effort is to reply with the Brooklyn Greeting



[- YouTube](#)

---

#### Undisclosed Manufacturer #9

I'm seriously tempted to turn the tables against Verkada and buy an email list for schools, then use Constant Contact to blast this article out to all of them.

---

#### Undisclosed End User #10

When will SHI and IU13 realize Verkada is not a good company to do business with?

[Verkada - IU13](#)

---

#### Undisclosed End User #10

In reply to Undisclosed End User #10

You disagreed please comment. I'd love to hear from you. The harassment and shady tactics from Verkada is relentless.

---

#### Undisclosed End User #4

In reply to Undisclosed End User #10

You probably won't get a response. Looks like some Varkadawg came through and hit disagree on everyone's comments.

---

#### Undisclosed #11

SEO: All these Verkada comments in a Verkada thread about Verkada mean anyone googling Verkada to learn about Verkada is likely to find this Verkada post about Verkada.

..... Verkada.

---

**Sergio Guzman** Pine Crest School | IPVMU Certified

Make Public.

---

**William Brooks** IPVMU Certified

After giving the Verkada cameras a fair shake for our school district, test ran 2 cameras for a month, and determined that quality was average, interface had some nice qualities, licensing was very restrictive. Ultimately determined Verkada was not a good fit, we did not want a proprietary system, with mandatory licensing fees, and wanted to control our video storage (right decision there after seeing Verkada's poor track record in securing cloud video storage).

We told them we were not interested and they would not go away. Then they started emailing other people in the district, so our tech department set our spam filter to block anything from Verkada. Problem solved.

---