

Rick's Story

A parent's nightmare

Normally I would have subtitled this a Parent's Worst Nightmare, but there are so many things children find to confound and terrify their parents I did not want to presume my story was the worst. However, it is a common one.

My kids are grown and have children of their own, which I sometimes "get" to take care of for a few hours or days. About 3 months ago I was taking my granddaughter Maia to Sea World. We live close to the park and go there often, this has lead to a casual relationship with the park where we tend to wander with no set goal in mind. As I later realized it also instilled a casual relationship with safety.

We had just seen a Sea lion show and were headed home. Across from the show was a large Sea Lion exhibit and Maia wanted to feed the "Lions" before we left. Being the Grandfather I am and Maia being the 5 year old darling that she is, she got what she wanted. I went to buy some fish turned around to hand them to her and she was gone.

Panic! Well not really, first thought - she can't be far probably staring at the seals, let's look around. No Maia, then real panic sets in.

I write software for school administrators. Why am I recounting my personal crisis? Maia's fleeting disappearance reminded me of why I wrote Seeker. Every parent wants to know where their child is all the time. In an ideal world the school would always know the whereabouts of every child. When a crisis hits, be it a lockdown, fire or other emergency every parent is going to expect the school to be able to answer the "Where is my child?" question, accurately and quickly. Unfortunately the answer to that question can be hard, (buy a fish turn around and your granddaughter is gone into a crowd). In a school a fire alarm sounds and suddenly you have a thousand students heading to rally points hopefully in an organized fashion, but maybe not, especially, if there is real fire.

When I first started writing software for schools it was all about speeding up the ID process ([tap here to see the previous blog](#)). I learned how incredibly chaotic things become in a school when you have hundreds of students milling around waiting to be told what to do next. I thought if this how things are when the students are just waiting around for an ID, how crazy it must be during a real emergency. I realized I could do more with the student data than just print IDs and the first version of Seeker was born.

Seeker provides a comprehensive tracking system for students during an emergency. From my parent's perspective it has two primary design goals:

1. Enable the staff to answer the question: "Where is my child"
2. Assist the first responders by providing a list of all the missing students.

Seeker achieves all of its design goals and is in use in many today.

Oh, Maia was safe, in the care of Sea World staff. People are always the first line of defense, but a little tech help can never hurt.