

iQ “In Quotes”

Gareth Kershaw



Put down your weapon and step away from the rayon suit...

Remember Robocop? (the film rather than the frankly parlous TV series that is); specifically the bit where the baddy robot (the ED209?) malfunctions and mercilessly slaughters an unarmed boardroom executive.

In fairness, the latter is clad in a nasty 1980s suit of the rayon-stay-press variety favoured by ponytailed advertising types of the period, so he probably deserves his fate. But that's not why the scene comes to mind.

It's the warning the robot gives pre-rampage: “PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON. YOU HAVE 20 SECONDS TO COMPLY.” Petrified and confused, stay-press Fred immediately does as he's told. ED209 takes no notice:

“PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON.
YOU HAVE 15 SECONDS TO COMPLY...”

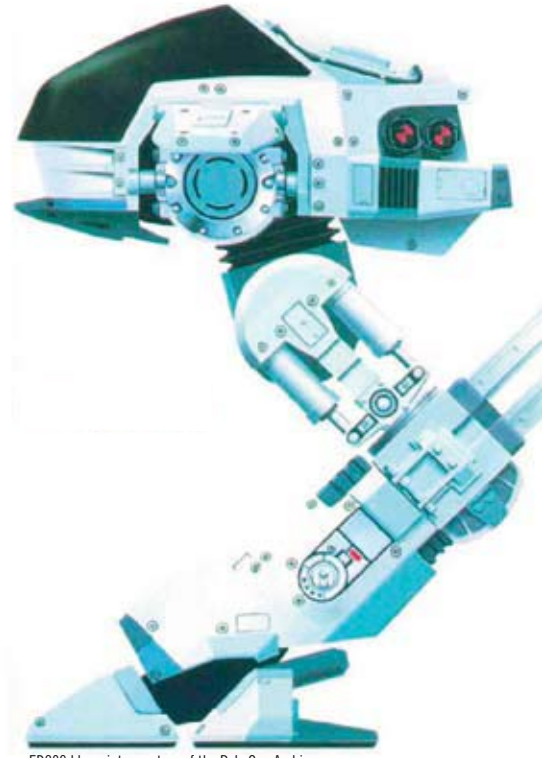
Long story short, the rest of the board hastily put some distance between themselves and the eventual victim (talk about art imitating life), who is slain precisely 15.01 seconds later; vehement and increasingly desperate protestations notwithstanding.

The big, bad, bullying authority. The distraught, befuddled executive. The culture of fear. Comply or die. Remind you of anything? For me it's disturbingly redolent of the current hysteria surrounding corporate governance. There's a raft of new legislation, any number of bodies determined to enforce it, and a whole lot of executives terrified at the prospect. Everyone knows they have to comply, and most want to. But such is the associated legal and logistic complexity, that no-one seems entirely sure what they have to comply with. Or quite how to comply with it. Especially when it comes to their systems and data.

Here's my slightly belated point. Compliance as it is now defined is a truly massive job. It requires the collaboration of many departments, technologies, and IT vendors. But not nearly enough of them are working together; pulling in the same direction for greater good.

It's time for some collective responsibility. Otherwise we're going to see the demise of a lot more suits. And, stay-press or not, that'd be bad news for everyone.

Gareth Kershaw is Editor of iQ



ED209 blueprints courtesy of the RoboCop Archive