



## Network video – making the difference in retail

*All retailers should have network video on their technology wish list, declares Axis Communications country manager Roy Alves. These surveillance systems have so much more to offer retailers, both in terms of loss prevention and improving the customer experience and with a far lower cost of ownership.*

Businesses nowadays, from the small corner shop to the hyper-market, are embracing the fundamental technology of network video surveillance.

Traditionally, retailers have implemented surveillance systems, mainly analogue-based, to deter and catch shoplifters and violent criminals, but new technologies such as network cameras provide a new weapon against shrinkage and open the door to a wide range of intelligent applications.

"Network cameras differ from conventional analogue CCTV cameras as they connect and feed images via a store's existing IT network, rather than through a separate, 'Closed Circuit' TV network," Alves explains. "Network video offers lower installation costs by using standard IT based cabling. By incorporating Power over Ethernet it can also supply power using the same cable. Maintenance is simpler, as network video uses a standard Ethernet network, which is widely used and understood by IT specialists and adheres to IT network standards.

A network video system is accessed through standard PC-based equipment and software browsers making it easy to use. Alves says adding additional cameras to an existing network is as

easy as adding another desktop to the local IT network. "Swift, intermediate installations are also simple using standard wireless network connections. Also, today's network equipment takes full advantage of the rigorous safety measures that apply in the network world. No extra equipment or software is needed to maintain a very high level of security."

Retail managers can have remote access to any of their stores' video – live and recorded material – from any desired location. Once authorised, staff can access individual devices across the globe via an internet-enabled PC, laptop or PDA, providing a valuable management tool to monitor store trading at any time.

### **A wealth of applications**

"Many new applications, which are much easier to integrate with existing retail systems, are available to retailers thanks to network video," Alves continues, "as network video solutions are based on accepted IT standards and equipment. With network video, retailers can take advantage of today's IT standards and equipment and use these applications, not only to prevent fraud and loss, but also to improve sales."

### People counting

A network-based people counting solution, either built-in to the camera or using server software, provides real-time information, allowing for conversion rate monitoring where people entering a store are counted and compared with people actually buying something in the store. Other advantages include straightforward system integration with standard databases, enabling more advanced customer analysis such as buyer-to-browser ratio and more intelligent evaluation of promotions. In addition, such a solution can easily be used to optimise store layout through analysing customer 'flow' around the store, through to customer interest in in-store displays and promotions.

### Enhanced POS exception investigations with high quality video

Network video cameras allow for tight integration with POS (Point of Sales). Till transactions can be recorded, together with video for total reassurance for customers, business and staff. Exceptions such as returns, manually entered values and line corrections can easily be discovered and investigated together with high-quality video clips. The image

detail sets network video apart – such as seeing value of a note handed over to the cashier through to the kind of item handed over by the customer to the cashier.

### Superior image quality

"Retailers need to ask whether the images recorded by their existing surveillance system are of high enough quality to be admissible in court or to reveal important details," says Alves. "A combination of megapixel and HDTV network cameras offer resolutions far greater than analogue cameras, while progressive scan technology reduces the 'jaggedness' normally associated with analogue-based video recordings. There is also no loss of quality when storing a digital image."

Network video is easy to set up, Alves continues. "Simply connect your network camera to your network and go – using network cameras and video management software, you can immediately view, record and administer your images from any PC with access to the Internet."

"More and more devices for controlling, securing and monitoring the retail environment are using network infrastructure, such as heating and ventilation systems, access control,



**Roy Alves** – "Network cameras offer future-proof surveillance for the years ahead."

even through to lighting and energy management," he adds. "Network cameras offer future-proof surveillance for the years ahead, as traditional analogue systems become increasingly costly to maintain, harder to integrate into wider store control systems and fall behind in terms of functionality." ■