

AXIS Q&A for ITWeb

Roy Alves, Country Manager, Axis South Africa

Business Questions

1. How do you think technology in your sector is benefiting the country?

The physical presence of network cameras has a proven benefit of deterring criminals which increases the safety and security of the chosen areas. The system works not only as an effective prevention measure but also helps apprehend criminals. Using the correct video management software, you have the ability to view and record high quality video and audio streams. This gives you the ability to go back to the highlighted incident and use the footage as proof to either persecute or prove somebody's innocence, helping to clean up the streets and ensure the correct offenders are locked behind bars.

Another instance of this technology benefiting South Africa, would be the upgraded surveillance systems that were installed into the stadia during the 2010 World Cup. Advanced surveillance systems were required to ensure the safety of all visitors, staff and contractors. These network cameras helped prevent stampedes, troublesome fans were identified and the apprehension of a number of individuals responsible for stealing was also made possible.

2. What is the major trend you are seeing in the industry?

Convergence is the most important trend in the security market at the moment. Following this trend, we are seeing an increase in sales of IP-based products into segments where analogue products have been dominant in the past. End users are fast becoming more aware of the benefits of an IP based camera system. The versatility and adaptability this technology affords its users far exceeds the benefits of an analogue system.

3. Which new technologies are coming into the market?

Three technologies that stand out would include Megapixel, High-Definition and IP Thermal Imaging cameras. Megapixel and HD cameras allow for higher resolution which provides more detail to be seen in an image which facilitates the identification of objects and people. Megapixel and HD resolution allows the same scene to be viewed in greater detail, or a larger scene to be viewed at a maintained resolution. Thermal IP cameras make detection in complete darkness or poor weather conditions possible as it creates images based on the heat that always radiates from any object, vehicle or person.

Personal Questions

1. How did you become involved in your industry?

We started out as a small IT company manufacturing protocol converters which attach ASCII & postscript printers to IBM host environments. We developed our own ASIC chipset and rapidly became a global leader in this field. This piece of hardware, which allowed you to print to standard parallel computer printers from your IBM 390 mainframes and IBM AS400 types systems, allowed us to port this technology to the LAN environments allowing us to attach peripheral equipment to the network. Our product range then expanded to include network attach storage (NAS), LAN print servers, CD/DVD network attach jukeboxes, attached standard USB / SCSI scanners to the network and started developing the concept of attached optics in the form of a network camera to the

network. Towards the end of the nineties we were the only company in the world developing this technology.

The idea of having intelligence in the camera with a built-in web server generated great interest during the internet boom as it allowed customers to stream web attraction events to a web page. Sales more or less doubled every year – at the same time we also developed video servers in conjunction with the camera products that allowed standard analogue camera's to be attached to the network. This meant that closed CCTV systems could be accessed across the network, drawing the attention of security type companies, leading to a huge market opportunity.

Today we are the global leader in network video with an annual growth rate of around 40%. In the local market, nearly 50% of all camera's sold are network attach IP cameras, although analogue still has a major share due to the number of manufacturers (and low prices) but their days are numbered. These days prices of network cameras are steadily declining and the IP cameras offer far superior image quality, more intelligence built into the device and often Ethernet is available everywhere.

2. What do you love the most about your job?

From humble beginnings as a fairly small IT company, to the power house in camera CCTV surveillance that Axis is today, we are constantly on the cutting edge of video surveillance. We continue to succeed in procuring many large CCTV projects around the world, albeit that our competitors have been building analogue cameras for nearly 50 years.

3. What inspires you?

From a relationship perspective I would say dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic people who have multiple talents and are happy and fulfilled. I also get hugely inspired by the rapid evolution of technology. As Axis, we are an innovative company with a strong focus on research and development in the network video space. We have been at the cutting edge of network video for nearly 15 years and the image quality is getting better and better at higher frame rates with less bandwidth. In essence I draw a lot of inspiration from the type of company that I work for.

4. What has been a highlight in your career?

Installing surveillance camera's in many of the soccer world cup stadiums for the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

5. Who have been the major influences in your life and why?

My children, I have 3 kids who give me a very different perspective on the world that we take for granted. They ask questions that are so simple but quite hard to answer. Much of what we do today will influence our kids' future, from how we conserve energy, to recycling, to their education. As adults and parents we need to sit up and take notice of their futures. We generally all live for today with little interest in tomorrow – it starts with our commitment to our environment to make it possible for them to have a good quality of life one day.

6. What is your dream job & why?

Renting jetskis on a beach in Hawaii ☺

7. What did you want to be when you were little?

I was crazy about all forms of racing and I think that, from the first time I could crawl into something with wheels or a device that could move, I was ready to compete. I am very much a complete petrol head and I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to race most means of transport, including jetskis.

8. What is your favourite personal quote?

In the middle of difficulties lie opportunities – Albert Einstein.