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<< Security

## EU surveillance tools proliferate

BY LEON ENGELBRECHT, ITWEB SENIOR WRITER

[ Copenhagen, Denmark | ITWeb, 11 October 2007 ] - Retail security and loss prevention requires a balance between a business's need to snoop and the right of employees and customers to privacy, says Dagrofa Group corporate head of security Flemming Bang Dammann.

Dagrofa Group business units include Denmark's Spar supermarkets.

Dammann says 25% of Danish retail workers are threatened or subjected to verbal abuse every year and over 800 robberies are reported to police.

He adds that shrinkage in Danish shops cost business half-a-billion euro in 2006, according to the European Retail Theft Barometer, an amount equivalent to 1.24% of the yearly turnover. "This will run a small business into bankruptcy if not checked," Dammann told an Axis Communications media event, in Copenhagen.

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"It's important to note that network video surveillance (NVS) is only one of the various measures we use to ensure security in our supermarkets, stores and warehouses," says Dammann. "It is also important to note NVS is the one security measure that we presently spend the largest part of our security budget on – because video can be used effectively and variously."

While Dagrofa has gone digital, many businesses still rely on legacy analogue systems. Axis strategic channels director Jumbi Edulbehram says many businesses set themselves up for failure. This is evident in a study done in Sweden, showing that up to 90% of analogue video given to police is useless for identifying suspects or prosecuting criminals.

Yet civil rights groups often complain of the loss of privacy inside stores and even on city streets, as surveillance equipment proliferates. Axis president and CEO Ray Maurittsson says finding a balance between business needs and customer rights is "complicated", making it "hard to give a straightforward answer". He notes that while cameras proliferate in Britain, their spread in public spaces in Sweden has been stopped.

A further complication is the ability of many new-generation NVS cameras to record audio in addition to video. Edulbehram says this gives the NVS systems great utility and enhances understanding of the video data gathered. But, it amounts to a substantially greater intrusion into public life than video systems.

Surveillance systems are becoming more acceptable to the public, Maurittsson says, although he concedes this is often the result of "not so attractive incidents".

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