

Digital solution improves service while increasing security and revenue.

Sweden's first unmanned confectionery stores install a comprehensive system from Axis, Milestone Systems and Entryfy to optimise security, improve service and boost profits.



Organization:

Crazy Candy

Location:

Uppsala, Sweden

Industry segment:

Retail

Application:

Access control, safety and security, audio announcements

Axis partners:

Entryfy, Milestone Systems

Mission

Confectionery retailer Crazy Candy needed to reduce costs and staff numbers as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. With a move to unmanned operations in mind, the company wanted to realise its vision while keeping customers safe and stores secure. A complete solution was sought which would comprise access control, network surveillance and IP audio to support operations, resulting in a reduction in staffing costs, extended opening hours and a great customer experience.

Solution

A comprehensive system from Axis was selected, comprised of AXIS A1001 Network Door Controllers, AXIS P3245-V Network Cameras, and AXIS C1004-E Network Cabinet Speakers, together with a cloud-based video management system (VMS), Milestone XProtect® Professional+, from Milestone Systems. To facilitate unmanned entry, a solution from Entryfy was incorporated that requires customers to scan a QR code using a mobile phone and identify themselves via mobile BankID. Positive authentication then results in automatic entry to the store.

Result

Crazy Candy has benefitted greatly from a flexible, comprehensive solution which improves security and access at its stores, helping to make the unmanned retail vision a reality. Network cameras monitor the entrance and sales areas at each store, including check-out terminals, while access control mechanisms grant smooth, touch-free access to customers. IP audio speakers provide ambient music to create a relaxed in-store atmosphere, while also offering the ability to play alerts or voice messages as required. The solution has enabled extended store opening hours, improved customer experience and, ultimately, strengthened the Crazy Candy brand. Management has also reported an increase in sales.

Digital solution improves service and increases security and revenue

"Welcome to Crazy Candy!" The pre-recorded voice message can be heard from the loud-speaker as visitors enter Crazy Candy's unmanned bulk confectionery store in Uppsala, just north of Stockholm. The lights switch on, the music starts. Instead of shop staff, the store features a fully digitalised solution with door entry system, loudspeakers, network camera, and checkout.

Challenging beginnings

Crazy Candy opened the first of its two stores just as the Coronavirus pandemic hit. After a few, very difficult months, mired by restrictions and experiencing a loss of revenue, it was clear that the store's owners would drastically need to cut costs and reduce staff head count. The situation escalated to the point where there were only two viable options; close the stores or find an alternative solution that would improve store success and ultimately revenue.

Tough start

Damoon Mortezaie, Founder, Crazy Candy, begins: "We found ourselves in a desperate situation. We wanted to stay open and to win back our customers, but we knew that a radical transformation was needed in order to do so. We decided to fully automate our stores and stay open around the clock."

It was very important that the stores should be secure without compromising customer experience. The solution would need to be future-proof, implementing technology that would allow devices to be incorporated as required. It also needed to be robust, reliable and completely automated. Damoon continues: "We wanted a seamless and comprehensive solution, utilising very high-quality products that would be long-lasting and fully scalable to meet ongoing business requirements."

A solution to support retail innovation

Crazy Candy installed a cloud-based system which was comprised of Axis' door control solution, network cameras and loudspeakers, a digital access control system from Entryfy and a video management tool from Milestone Systems. As all products were designed and manufactured based on open standards, this facilitated seamless interoperability between Axis own-brand and third-party systems to create a comprehensive, overarching solution.

Store doors are contactless, requiring QR code and BankID activation which provides confirmation of identity. Once inside, a store welcome message is automatically triggered as lights switch on and ambient music begins to play. Audio instructions follow, explaining how to use the store.

Damoon explains the identification system: "While a mobile accessible system called BankID is used as identification in Sweden, other technical identification solutions can also be used with this system, which can be tailored depending on country or territory."

Transactions take place at a digital checkout terminal where customers weigh and scan their confectionery before paying. When the store is empty once again, the music stops and the lighting switches off after a short delay, saving energy. This offers a distinct advantage over manned stores which would still draw power even when empty for extended periods. Store surveillance cameras are monitored and operated remotely from a central control room, offering seamless operation regardless of the number of stores. Recorded video material can be processed and passed to authorities when necessary, in accordance with applicable laws.

High-quality technology with ongoing support

Axis solutions are designed for reliability over the longer term, as well as simple operation and maintenance backed by full Axis support. Axis network cameras offer high-quality light sensitive image capture with wide dynamic range (WDR), so they can produce sharp images even in variable light conditions. In addition, Axis Light-finder technology allows image capture in almost total darkness; highly beneficial when used to protect a retail site such as Crazy Candy where lights are automatically turned off when the last customer leaves.

The IP audio solution employed on site requires no additional hardware and is simple to install, saving time and money and reducing the requirement for technical expertise for fine-tuning, while Entryfy's access control solution can be adapted for different applications to support access cards, codes, and opening via mobile app, in addition to the BankID solution.





Amanda Fischer, Chief Operating Officer at Entryfy comments on the partnership that has brought this technology together: "This is how a partnership should work, with a high level of mutual confidence, and a close dialogue on product development. When we develop new solutions, services and products, it is natural for us to choose Axis' qualitative hardware. The products are simple to integrate, and operational reliability is outstanding."

Reduced costs and increased revenues

The solution has resulted in a significant reduction in costs for Crazy Candy. In addition, revenues have increased, as customers enjoy the increased flexibility, enabling them to shop over 24 hours, 7 days a week. The solution has exceeded expectations and proven that there is a high demand for fresh, high-quality bulk confectionery even in challenging times.

Damoon reveals that he was initially worried about theft due to customers being able to let themselves into a completely autonomous store, but these fears were quickly allayed: "Due to the fact that visitors identify themselves before being allowed into the store, and are then monitored with surveillance cameras, wastage is small and attempted theft is very low; people pay and do the right thing. We have had a couple of minor incidents but these were very quickly resolved. In general, customers behave better without staff than with staff being present."

A positive response and future plans

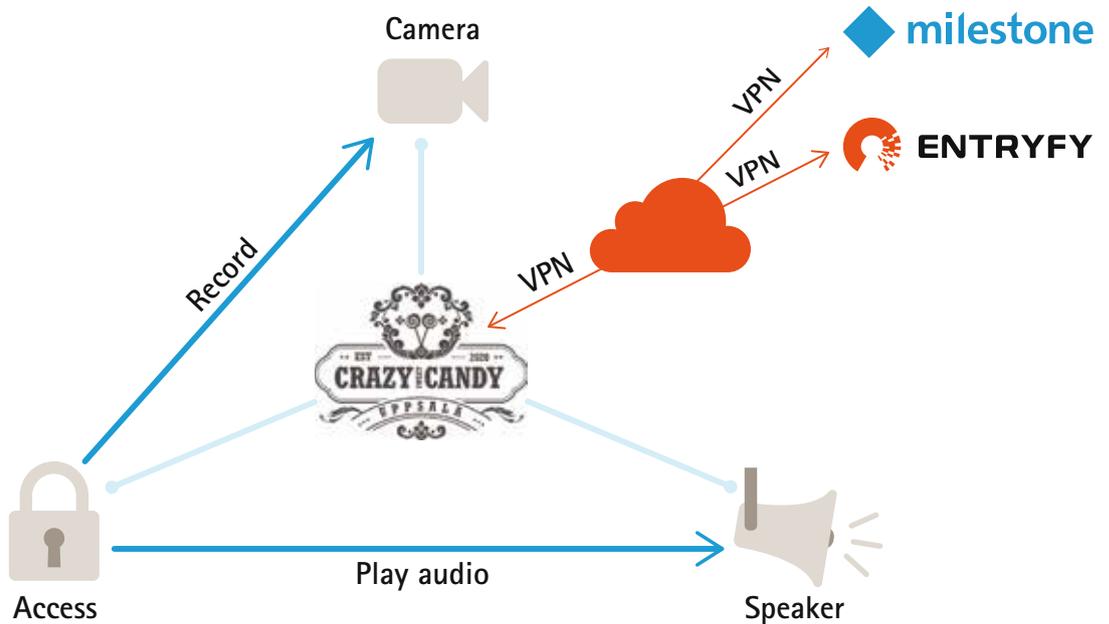
Crazy Candy has received an extremely positive response from customers. Regular clientele includes students shopping at night, shift workers, and older people who prefer to shop very early in the morning. It is also popular with families who prefer to use Crazy Candy rather than queuing in a crowded super-market environment.

Regarding plans for the future, the next step is to open new stores in other locations in Sweden, where the strategy is to be within or adjacent to residential areas. Automated voice messages are to be improved, using the camera system to track customer movement around the store, and the loudspeaker to give special offers for products that are on display at the checkout.

Damoon concludes: "I am incredibly grateful for this solution. Its flexibility and ease of use have transformed the business and mean that I don't have to be on-site all the time. We want to become Sweden's largest independent chain of unmanned confectionery stores, and with Axis, Milestone Systems and Entryfy providing such a high-quality collaborative solution to meet our needs, it feels like anything is possible."

"We are very happy with Entryfy's solution and the Axis products. The products are of high quality and work very well together."

Damoon Mortezaie, one of the founders of Crazy Candy.



About Axis Communications

Axis enables a smarter and safer world by creating network solutions that provide insights for improving security and new ways of doing business. As the industry leader in network video, Axis offers products and services for video surveillance and analytics, access control, intercom and audio systems. Axis has more than 3,800 dedicated employees in over 50 countries and collaborates with partners worldwide to deliver customer solutions. Axis was founded in 1984 and has its headquarters in Lund, Sweden.

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