

Streamlining arena security with Axis.

United Center skates its way to a unified network solution.

**Organization:**

United Center

Location:

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Industry segment:

Stadiums and venues

Application:

Access control, safety and security, loss prevention

Axis partners:

Convergent Technologies,
Genetec

Mission

Frustrated with a faulty analog security setup, the United Center set out to raise their technology standards and centralize operations through a network system. A host venue to about 225 major events annually, security staff no longer wanted to worry about equipment malfunctions so that they could maintain the venue's chief goal: to create a safe environment for its spectators, performers and employees.

Solution

The arena streamlined its security operations, both through its deployed hardware of Axis network cameras and its in-house command center running Genetec's VMS platform. The security team now has a central location to dispatch calls, monitor any potential incidents on screen and make calls through the PA system.

Result

With additions to the facilities coming and ever-changing technologies, the United Center put itself on the fast track to long-term success by implementing a scalable system and focusing on future progress toward expanding its efforts. The collaboration with Axis, Genetec and Convergent Technologies to deploy a top-of-the-line and easy-to-use system continues to pay dividends; it has allowed personnel to focus less on technical troubleshooting and more on the safety of the potentially thousands of people on the property on any given night.



Always a packed house

Home to two historic sports franchises and a star-studded entertainment lineup year-round, the United Center is a renowned major venue located in the heart of downtown Chicago. The arena hosts over 80 home games for both Chicago's professional basketball and hockey teams, the Bulls and the Blackhawks, on top of countless music and performance acts throughout the year.

With such a busy schedule, the site's security staff is not only charged with monitoring the flow of event attendees, ranging from 16,000 to 22,500 depending on the floor setup and capacity, but also operational teams entering and exiting the premises. When the space is being converted from an ice rink to a concert stage, numerous staff and employees from different organizations and production companies are constantly moving throughout. The United Center maintains their primary goal of creating a safe environment.

Shifting the gameplan

The security staff at the United Center held concerns about their prior surveillance system for its unnecessary complications and poor quality. To scrap their old DVRs, the team transitioned to a fully network-compatible system on Genetec Security Center, centralizing a new selection of Axis IP cameras onto the Omnicast VMS.

Current count of cameras in and around the United Center has eclipsed 304, where security can monitor a selection of key areas, especially any potential entrance into the building. These critical locations include main gates, corridors and concourses, player entrances by the loading dock and parking lots. Areas with higher volumes of traffic are also under watch.

United Center implemented several AXIS M3007-PV Network Cameras in many of its concession stands and backstage areas due to its 360-degree views at up to 5-megapixel resolution.

"We're utilizing those cameras in certain areas where before, I would have had to use four fixed cameras just to pick up that one space," noted Alex Hernandez, Senior Director of Security at the United Center.

"Now I only need one 360 camera and the job gets done. Those save me on licenses, they save me on camera counts."

To filter through a busy scene on a gameday, the United Center makes use of multiple Axis PTZ cameras to monitor a wide scene while being able to pan and zoom in to an area of interest if needed. Specifically, AXIS Q6045-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras are deployed outdoors to keep an eye on parking lots and the surrounding area.

Depth chart of cameras

Considering the mix of the arena's indoor and outdoor needs both during the day and at night, the United Center works side-by-side with Convergent Technologies to pinpoint a solution to each unique scenario. When it came to securing a new building addition on the east side of the venue, Hernandez called on Convergent for support on the new installations.

"We sat down before the new addition was finished," recalled Greg Kubacki, Vice President of Convergent Technologies, "and because of the flexibility and the styles and camera types that Axis offers, we were able to pick and choose within just that one manufacturer's realm to meet the different needs in different areas. For the vault areas, the wide open areas, the retail areas, the exterior parking lot views. It was really nice; our Axis sales representative came in and then AXIS Design Tool really helped make it a very easy exercise in my mind."

Collaboration on the system has been key, as the United Center's IT group continues to do a sizable amount of the cabling work while Convergent steps in as a helpful asset throughout the process.





“It’s basically been the ease of using the camera that’s been enjoyable. It’s not hard like some of the other models. We’re very happy with the quality, the picture. That’s why I’m going with Axis; price and quality is the reason we’ll stick with Axis.”

“We work well with Convergent in ordering all of the cameras and equipment,” Hernandez explained. “They come out and do software upgrades and work with our tech department to make sure everything is running smoothly.”

Committing to a strategy

Challenges faced by the United Center come in all forms, from operational to security and public safety. The administrative staff is able to use the system to confirm time and attendance of employees. Dockworkers verify delivery times in case of any discrepancies. Loss prevention is always a concern with a main team store and tens of retail and merchandise kiosks throughout the arena.

With that, the United Center faced a decision in centralizing its security system, where it has decided to standardize on Axis as operations grow. “Now’s a perfect time,” commented Hernandez. “We’re constructing several buildings, so we think, ‘Why not go with doing it the right way now instead of having to go back?’”

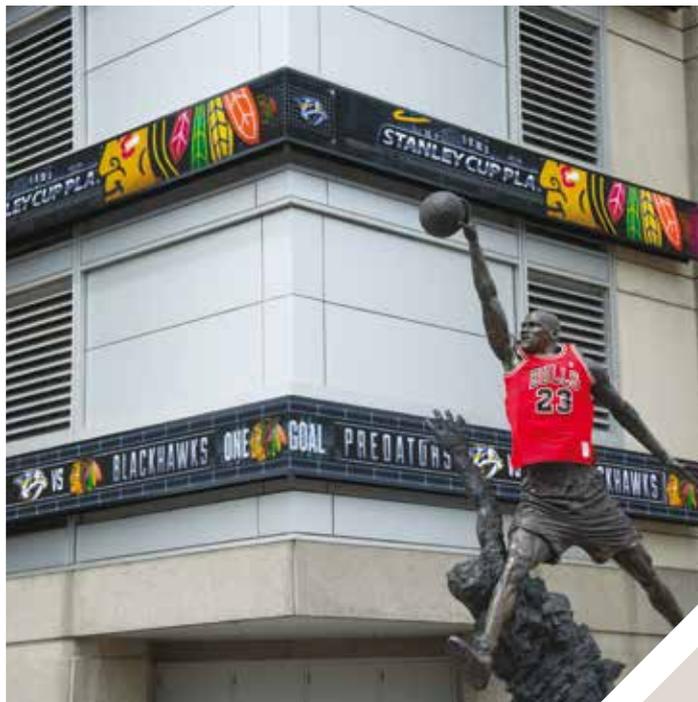
Prospects down the road

Though the venue deploys a number of AXIS M3046-V Network Cameras, mini domes that take advantage of Axis’ Zipstream Technology, Hernandez has plans to add more cameras to the network that have that capability in order to continue saving on storage. Many

of the fixed cameras throughout the concourses and seating bowl are M-line models that record on motion, though a selection do record continuously in high volume traffic spots, like employee entrances and main gates. This creates a need for added storage considering all of the newly installed equipment.

“Our goal is to get more storage by going with Zipstream-enabled cameras,” suggested Hernandez. “That always is a huge factor for us, to save on storage space.”

Other target areas of consideration for future upgrades are the facility’s access control system, which Hernandez is aiming to centralize and connect into the Genetec platform.



About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the market leader in network video, Axis is driving the industry by continually launching innovative network products based on an open platform - delivering high value to customers through a global partner network. Axis has long-term relationships with partners and provides them with knowledge and ground-breaking network products in existing and new markets.

Axis has more than 2,100 dedicated employees in more than 50 countries around the world, supported by a global network of over 80,000 partners. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com.