Choosing the right video management software solution
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1. Introduction

Axis offers a number of video management solutions that complement its portfolio of network cameras, video encoders and other products. This document presents an overview of the main characteristics and differences between the systems, and gives guidelines on how to select the right solution.

2. What is video management?

A video surveillance solution consists of the following building blocks:

1. Cameras
2. Network infrastructure
3. Storage solution
4. Software for managing the system, viewing live and recorded video, etc.

In the analog days, analog cameras were connected over an infrastructure of coaxial cables to a DVR, which functioned as the storage solution. The DVR came preconfigured with a basic software solution for managing the system, viewing video etc. This was achieved by connecting a screen, a mouse and/or a keyboard to the DVR. As the system was supplied together with the DVR, it was proprietary and offered limited functionality.

In an IP (network video) system, the cameras are connected over a standard computer Ethernet network such as LAN, WAN or the Internet. Video is either stored on a central computer server/PC, a Network Attached Storage (NAS) unit, or on SD cards inside each camera. A web browser can be used to view live video from a camera, but for handling recording and other functionality in the system, a video management software solution is needed. The video management software can be installed on the same PC as the storage, or on a separate PC. In some systems, the cameras have enough video management software built into themselves so that the user only needs smartphone/tablet apps to view live and recorded video.

3. Axis’ approach to video management

Axis network cameras and encoders have an open interface which has made it very easy for third-party vendors of video management systems to integrate the cameras with their systems. Today, Axis’ Application Development Partner (ADP) program comprises over 800 companies that provide video management solutions for all kinds of needs: from very small to large, enterprise solutions with thousands of cameras. In addition, ADPs offer many specialized solutions for various industry needs or geographical requirements.

Axis also offers its own selection of video management solutions that complements the ADP solutions by addressing in particular the needs of small installation, the increasing requests for hosted video solutions (cloud solutions) and requests from customers demanding a single-vendor solution.
4. **Axis’ four video management solutions**

This strategy has allowed Axis to provide its customers with four main alternative solutions for video management. Regardless of the choice, the customer can rest assured that the solution will work together with Axis cameras, video encoders, and system accessories:

1. Axis application development partners (ADP)
2. Hosted video
3. AXIS Camera Companion
4. AXIS Camera Station

**Axis Application Development Partners (ADP)**

Axis has the largest application development partner program in the industry. The partners offer customized and specialized surveillance solutions for any system complexity or size – small, medium or enterprise – single-site or multiple sites. There are systems on the market that support hundreds of thousands of cameras in extremely large installations.

In Axis ADP program, it is easy for customers to find a customized solution that meets their need. The systems offer optimized features and functionality for many purposes, as well as solutions that are specific for an industry segment. There are ADP applications that are localized for specific countries and languages. Some video management solutions are scalable to include any number or model of network video products, and other systems easily integrate with existing physical security and operating systems.

**Hosted video**

Hosted video describes video surveillance provided as a cloud-based service, which makes it different in character compared to the other solutions presented in this document. A hosted video solution limits the customer’s investment to an Axis camera or encoder and an Internet connection, instead of having to maintain the recording and monitoring station locally. Web clients and smartphone apps allow easy access to video from any location. A video service provider manages system maintenance as well as storage of recorded data. The solution is ideal for systems with a few cameras on each site in single or multiple locations such as convenience stores, gas stations, retail stores, and small offices.

Hosted video provides new possibilities to protect and develop the customer’s business. An Axis hosted video solution can be integrated with a central station alarm platform for additional possibilities and Axis’ network of service providers offers surveillance services such as remote storage of video, remote monitoring, remote guard tour and guard-force services. They can also provide business management services such as monitoring of drive-through-promotions, daily deliveries and cash protection.

**AXIS Camera Companion**

AXIS Camera Companion is a basic video surveillance solution where video is recorded in the cameras and no other recording device is needed. AXIS Camera Companion is a video surveillance solution for small businesses such as retail stores, hotels and offices. The system consists of standard Axis cameras, SD cards, software clients for PC and smartphones, and standard network equipment. The software has extensive language support.
AXIS Camera Companion is typically used in small systems with up to around 8 cameras. The solution is very easy to install and use, and it is easy to access the system over the Internet to view live or recorded video. With its PC client, as well as viewing apps for smartphones, AXIS Camera Companion lets the customer view video at any time – from anywhere.

AXIS Camera Station

AXIS Camera Station is a fully featured surveillance solution, typical for medium-sized businesses. As a complete monitoring and recording system with video recorded on a system server, AXIS Camera Station is ideal for retail shops, hotels and schools. It offers easy installation with automatic camera discovery, a powerful configuration wizard and efficient management of the Axis network video products in the system. The software has extensive language support, and viewing apps for smartphones are available for easy access to video from any location.

AXIS Camera Station is typically found in installations with up to around 30 cameras, and it is designed to perfectly match Axis' wide range of network products and product features. It supports HDTV image quality and camera-based alarm triggers such as motion detection and cross line detection which enables optimization of bandwidth and storage efficiency. Support for failover recording and tampering alarm further secures system operation.

5. Overview chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offering type</th>
<th>Axis’ Application Development Partner (ADP) VMS</th>
<th>Hosted video</th>
<th>AXIS Camera Companion</th>
<th>AXIS Camera Station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical investment model</td>
<td>Varies, typically upfront investment in cameras and then a software license cost per channel</td>
<td>Service purchased with a monthly fee to a video service provider</td>
<td>Upfront investment in cameras, no monthly fee. Free software.</td>
<td>Upfront investment in cameras. Software license cost per channel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of other services in addition to video</td>
<td>Depends on partner</td>
<td>Yes, such as a guard service remotely monitoring the premises, business management, etc.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System setup</td>
<td>Varies, but typically a client-server video management software, where a PC is used for viewing and maintaining video</td>
<td>Hosted video surveillance managed by Axis video service providers, accessible over the web</td>
<td>Stand-alone video management software where PC is only needed at installation</td>
<td>Client-server video management software for PC, where a PC is used for viewing and maintaining video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Varies, typically records to a PC server on- or off-site</td>
<td>Hosted (cloud); possible to complement with recording to NAS on-site</td>
<td>Record to SD cards in cameras. Alternatively record to NAS on-site.</td>
<td>Record to PC server on-site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video management functionality</td>
<td>Varies from basic to feature-rich systems for segment-specific systems as well as complex enterprise solutions</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Feature-rich to support active and frequent usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera/encoder brand support</td>
<td>Integrated with Axis products, many support also other brands</td>
<td>Axis</td>
<td>Axis</td>
<td>Axis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-site support</td>
<td>Varies, but some systems support simultaneous access to hundreds of sites with advanced functionality</td>
<td>Yes, supports simultaneous access to thousands of sites with basic functionality</td>
<td>Yes, but no simultaneous access and with basic functionality</td>
<td>Yes, supports simultaneous access to a limited number of sites with basic functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote internet access</td>
<td>Yes, but depends on partner</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps for smartphones and tablets</td>
<td>Yes, but depends on partner</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with other systems such as access control or alarms</td>
<td>Systems with full integration exist, depends on partner</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, with basic functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical number of cameras on-site</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>5-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max number of cameras per site</td>
<td>Depends on partner, some support 1000s of cameras</td>
<td>~10 (bandwidth dependent)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. **Four easy steps to finding a solution**

Since the solutions address many different needs, it is impossible to present a complete guide that shows exactly which solution a customer should select. The following decision chart highlights some of the key differences in four easy questions. Be aware that it is only to be viewed as a guideline and not as an exhaustive decision chart.

![Decision Chart Image]

*Figure 2. Four questions as a guide to Axis' software solutions.*

7. **Where to buy**

Axis works in partnership with distributors, system integrators and resellers all over the world. Regardless of the customers’ needs or location, it should be possible to find a reseller in close proximity. As an authorized Axis’ partner, the reseller can give good advice on which system to select, as well as sell, install and maintain both Axis network video products and the video management system. To find the nearest Axis distributor or reseller, please visit www.axis.com/sales/.

For hosted video, Axis provides a network of video service providers. To find a suitable video service provider, please visit www.axis.com/hosting/service_providers.htm.

It is possible to download a free, fully functional version of AXIS Camera Companion from Axis’ web. There is also a free 30-day demo version of AXIS Camera Station available from Axis’ web.

8. **Conclusion**

As demonstrated in this document, Axis offers a variety of video management solutions, both from partners and its own portfolio. The four main types of solutions address many different needs and requirements. While it is possible to present the main characteristics of the systems, it is not possible to give a complete picture. Choosing the right system must in the end depend on many factors, where current and future requirements must be matched with budget constraints and technical possibilities.
Axis recommends that the customer always tests the system thoroughly before making a decision. Many video management software systems come with free test versions that can be used to try out the system in a real environment and with real user scenarios.

Contacting any of Axis knowledgeable resellers is a good first step to finding the perfect video management solution.

9. Helpful links and resources

For more information, see the following links and book:

> Axis Communications — Products/Software: www.axis.com/products/video/software/

> Axis Communications — Where to buy: www.axis.com/sales

> Axis Communications — Where to find a video service provider for hosted video:
  www.axis.com/hosting/service_providers.htm

> Axis Communications — Technical guide to network video:

> 'Intelligent Network Video: Understanding modern surveillance systems' by Fredrik Nilsson and Axis Communications (ISBN 1420061569)
About Axis Communications

As the market leader in network video, Axis is leading the way to a smarter, safer, more secure world — driving the shift from analog to digital video surveillance. Offering network video solutions for professional installations, Axis’ products and solutions are based on an innovative, open technology platform.

Axis has more than 1,400 dedicated employees in 40 locations around the world and cooperates with partners covering 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden–based IT company listed on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm under the ticker AXIS. For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com

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