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## **Storage grows by building bigger, better boxes**

***Increases in IP video surveillance call for more sophisticated storage***

By Matt Wickenheiser, contributing editor

The systems you deploy for customers may put cameras everywhere-perimeters, access points, hallways and high-security areas, all under the watchful eye of technology. But those images the eyes capture are only as good as the machines storing them.

What good is a visual security system if the images your customers can retrieve are of such poor quality as to render them effectively useless?

Or what if an access control issue comes to light a few weeks down the road, but the video's been trashed because there was no space to save everything?

More and more security clients have recognized these potential pitfalls, especially those deploying IP-based systems, and companies that make storage systems more sophisticated than your standard DVR for video surveillance, are reaping the benefits.

"Our business is on fire right now," said Lee Caswell, founder and chief marketing officer of storage provider Pivot3, which makes a highly scalable solution.

"No one goes into this thing saying, 'I want to buy more storage.' Storage has always been the tail of the dog. Recently, the desire they have to move to more cameras, higher resolution, longer retention time, means storage becomes the dominant piece."

The overall growth, experts suggest, comes down to a simple fact: All that stored video can actually be useful.

The software that allows you to review and search your digital video is getting a lot more intelligent, said Jame Ervin, product manager at DNF Security, a dedicated division of storage maker DNF.

Users with deployed video analytics can set up rules and triggers to notify different people if things happen and video can be tagged as it's stored, making retrieval of incidents fairly straightforward.

Expectations have grown regarding what a company can do with its stored

surveillance, agreed Caswell.

“That’s the Google effect-you can search whatever you want,” said Caswell. “It used to be having it for more than couple days didn’t help you; it was based on tape, all manual.”

Caswell said he’s seeing county jails in California expanding retention times from 30 days of recorded video to 24 months. Casinos are looking at anywhere from 30 days to 90 days.

Jeff Whitney, vice president of marketing at storage maker Intransa Inc., said he’s seen penitentiaries increasing their retention requirements from a year to three years. One driver of that, he said, is that the courts are so backed up. He’s also seeing video storage growth in some non-traditional areas. Intelligent monitoring systems are allowing businesses like restaurants and retail outfits to use video surveillance to monitor traffic flow and other trends.

Another trend driving storage growth is just the overall expansion of cameras in the United States.

The United Kingdom has roughly one camera for every eight citizens, while there’s one for every 12 citizens in the United States, notes Pivot3’s Caswell. While there’s been reluctance for camera growth in the United States, 9-11 changed that, he said.

“What you’re seeing is there’s a tradeoff of personal privacy rights for public safety,” said Caswell. “There’s a balance, but we’re moving toward more cameras overall.”

DNF’s Ervin said she lives in Oakland, Calif., where the police department is understaffed. Neighborhoods are setting up their own surveillance systems, she said.

One of Intransa’s customers is pharmaceutical manufacturer Baxter Health Care in Cherry Hill, N.J., which uses a video surveillance system to monitor manufacturing processes-as well as the traditional perimeter monitoring, access control points, etc.

They keep the manufacturing process data for up to 60 days, allowing them to check the floor if any issues pop up down the road.“They now have the video to go back and monitor,” Whitney said.

Levy Acs, president of New York-based American Integrated Security Group, said he puts a lot of video surveillance systems onto commercial space in the city, on buildings, schools, etc., and they’re increasing their retention times from something like 15 to 30 days a year ago to 30 to 60 days, now. Acs said he sees

that as protection against “slip-and-fall” lawsuits, more than anything.

He also noted that the price of storage has dropped dramatically, and is at a quarter of what it was three years ago-another driver of market growth.

Bob Banerjee, IP video product marketing manager at Bosch Security Systems Inc., said storage costs are typically halving every 18 months-and this is expected to continue. “With that in mind, purchasing the full amount of storage equipment up front for a video surveillance solution is a large capital investment that does not make economic sense for the end user,” said Banerjee in an e-mail interview. “If long-term retention is required, the end user can initially purchase a certain amount of storage, wait for storage costs to decrease or wait for next year’s budget allocation to become available, and then purchase the additional storage needed.”

With these more sophisticated IP surveillance systems, with their accompanying non-DVR storage, also comes a more sophisticated sales process, however. Acs, the integrator, said he’s also seeing more and more corporate IT types getting involved in IP surveillance system purchases.

“Every IP system nowadays will be owned by the IT department. They want to take over, they’re bored,” Acs griped. “They want to put their hands on the security part, and it’s not good for us dealers-they screw things up.”

Acs said every sale he does now has to go through a company’s IT department. And if his sales guy isn’t up on the latest buzzwords, “you lose the sale.”

Banerjee noted that IT owns the corporate network, and that it was “vitaly important to engage them early on in the bidding, planning and design stage of IP video installations.

“Listen to their concerns and work with them to find a solution that will overcome any objections they have. Integrators need to be able to speak intelligently to a customer’s IT staff and understand their terms and language,” he suggested.

However, he added, surveillance video is different than the kind of network data that IT is accustomed to.

“Integrators may need to work with IT to explain different aspects of the system—such as the resolution requirements for video that is useable for surveillance purposes or how parameters can be set to make more fluid systems that can adjust to accommodate network traffic surges,” said Banerjee. “For example, frame rates can drop temporarily, while the sharpness of each image is maintained, or the same number of frames can be recorded at a lower resolution.”

Whitney, of Intransa, said he didn't think the IT guys wanted the integrators' jobs. But it was important for integrators to master IP-based surveillance technology.

"We see that a lot of integrators aren't going to make it," said Whitney. "A lot of moms and pops, they're not interested in learning all this new IP stuff. They end up fighting for a smaller and smaller market for the analog stuff for the little QuickieMart."