

A jug of milk, a loaf of bread and Axis.

Kwik Trip convenience store chain uses Axis cameras for retail security and corporate quality control.



Organization:

Kwik Trip

Location:

La Cross, Wisconsin, USA

Industry segment:

Retail

Application:

Loss prevention, quality control, store management

Axis partners:

Hunter Security & Surveillance, Inc., Exacq Technologies

Mission

The Midwest-based convenience store chain, Kwik Trip, needs to protect itself against the same threats as many of its C-store competitors. In addition, Kwik Trip also manages its own bakery, commissary, dairy, and warehouse – producing, packing and shipping a wide variety of goods for all its stores 365 days a year. At the store level, the company wanted to install a high-resolution video surveillance system to help protect its thousands of employees and millions of customers, minimize theft and mitigate insurance claims. At the corporate level, they wanted to tighten quality control over food preparation, storage and distribution, as well as improve safety and security across its facilities.

Solution

Hunter Security & Surveillance Systems, a Greenville, WI-based integrator and Axis partner, devised a cost-saving hybrid strategy that augmented the corporation's existing analog cameras with AXIS P3301 Fixed Dome Network Cameras in high risk areas of its retail stores and outdoor AXIS P1343-E Network Cameras at its car washes.

Hunter also deployed a full-IP strategy at the various corporate operations centers using a mixed-array of high resolution Axis fixed and PTZ network cameras running under the management of exacqVision video management system (VMS) software.

Result

Axis cameras have not only provided forensic evidence of criminal activity but have assisted the company in maintaining high standards for food preparation and safety, reducing merchandise shrinkage and identifying and correcting inefficiencies in production and distribution.



Putting employee safety first

The Kwik Trip chain offers a time-saving, all-in-one shopping experience. In one stop, its customers can fill up on gas, load up on food and wash their car. The 24/7 chain employs thousands of workers at its convenience stores across Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. In addition, the corporate center in La Crosse, WI produces many of the bakery, dairy and ready-to-eat products that it sells.

"Whether we're talking about our retail stores, kitchens, distribution center, manufacturing plants or other facilities, employee safety is our most important priority," said Brett Gooden, Director of Loss Prevention.

Prior to 2004 only approximately 20 stores in the chain had surveillance systems in place. When Gooden was hired as the new corporate loss prevention director, he led an initiative to put analog CCTV systems in every store.

During this initiative, Kwik Trip was introduced to Axis network cameras by Greenville, WI-based integrator, Hunter Security & Surveillance. Matt Hunter, President and Installation Specialist for Hunter Security, initially recommended Axis for Kwik Trip's bakery and distribution center. Hunter suggested the high resolution offered by Axis cameras would help Kwik Trip better monitor their baked good production line, as well as verify product labels in the tobacco distribution center so they could more effectively oversee the handling of the high value items.

"From here, they saw the advantages of Axis cameras, so they wanted to try them in the stores," Hunter said. The level of visual detail offered by high resolution Axis cameras provided the perfect complement to the analog equipment. "It was all about picture quality."

"We partnered with Hunter Security & Surveillance to deploy Axis network cameras to cover the highest risk areas of our convenience stores," Gooden said. "This included the front doors, the cash registers, high shrink merchandise aisles and kitchens. We relegated our analog cameras to building exteriors and low shrink merchandise aisles."

In the past, Kwik Trip often relied on employee observation to verify the facts of an incident. Today, the Axis cameras have eyes on the situation. The high resolution cameras record and reveal detailed information about robberies, shoplifting attempts, employee theft, accidents and other activities. The video support helps the chain mitigate risks and reduce losses. "Compared to the old analog cameras, we see things a lot more clearly now," Gooden said.

Joining the Neighborhood Watch

Many Kwik Trip stores are situated on the corner of busy intersections. Not only do these strategic locations make the stores more accessible to customers, they also serve as an extra pair of eyes on the neighborhood.

According to Gooden, local law enforcement often reaches out to Kwik Trip to review the video captured by its Axis cameras. "If something happens in the vicinity, there's a good possibility that the person the police are looking for has been to a Kwik Trip right before or just after the incident," shared Gooden. "It didn't take long for law enforcement to figure out that Kwik Trip usually has the best camera system in town."





Assuring the highest quality control

Beyond the convenience stores, Axis cameras are integrated into every corner of the Kwik Trip operation. This helps the company achieve its goal of cost-effective operational excellence. For instance, at the corporate center, AXIS P3301 Fixed Dome Network Cameras keep an eye on food safety and sanitation standards in the dairy and the bakery, and AXIS P3343-VE cameras with weather-proof and vandal-resistant casing watch over ice cream production and freezer storage in temperatures as low as -40o F/C. In the distribution center, AXIS 216FD Network Cameras oversee a huge inventory of high-profit tobacco products that are vulnerable to theft.

Because the corporate center uses the exacqVision Enterprise VMS, Hunter Security was able to take advantage of the more advanced and intelligent features such as license plate recognition at the corporate fueling stations and near-immediate video retrieval.

The benefits of IP video system permeate throughout the entire company. "I deal with the Loss Prevention side," Gooden said, "but our operations team also uses the Axis/exacqVision system to monitor what's happening in our kitchen center to improve the efficiency of how we cook our food. We monitor store inventory, especially the foods we sell, to reduce waste. Based on what we witness on the video, we've also added and changed store policies and training to improve the quality of our customer service."

"Because we focus our high resolution Axis cameras on a store's high risk areas, they've helped us recoup losses and provide local police with sufficient detail to identify and apprehend suspects and their cohorts."

Brett Gooden, Director of Loss Prevention for Kwik Trip, Inc.

While each Kwik Trip stores archives its own video locally, the corporate communications center remotely monitors the cameras when incidents occur. Stores generally house the video for 30-60 days, depending on the size of the store, the volume of traffic and the size of the hard drive. When necessary, corporate extracts and stores incident video to preserve forensic evidence for prosecution.

Testing the benefits of full IP surveillance

Kwik Trip is currently field-testing an array of advanced Axis network cameras at its newest convenience store in Steven Points, WI. "We're building the surveillance system from the ground up to be a full IP-based solution indoors and out," explained Matt Hunter, President of Hunter Security & Surveillance Systems.

Some of the features being explored in this test environment include two-way audio, HDTV-quality resolution with advanced H.264 compression, 360o and 180o fields of view, longer range lenses for day/night clarity and sophisticated in-camera analytics like license-plate recognition.

This installation will give the Kwik Trip team an opportunity to see how best to incorporate cutting edge surveillance technology in their chain going forward.



About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the global 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 its customers and carried 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 1,600 dedicated employees in more than 40 countries around the world, supported by a network of over 69,000 partners across 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

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