

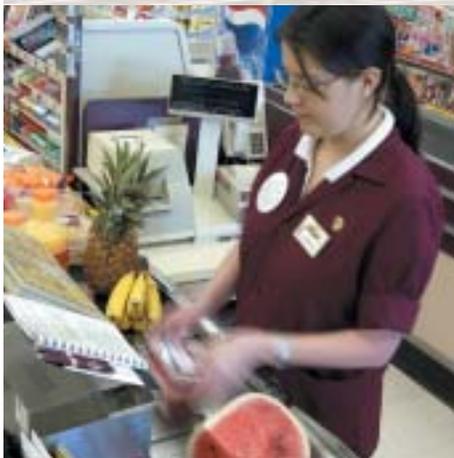
# Digital Video Advantage



## LOSS PREVENTION FIRST OF MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS FOR COBORN'S

With between 20 and 40 cash registers in the larger of its 80 retail locations, Minnesota-based grocery and convenience store owner Coborn's, Inc. recognized the potential benefits of upgrading to a digital video system years ago.

“The March Networks system did pretty much everything we wanted and could provide the storage we needed,” Larson recalls. “It could also tie into our network properly, which we really liked.”



Photography Doug Millar

**V**IDEO storage capacity, however, was a key issue, says the company's loss prevention director, Matt Larson (opposite).

“We mandate a minimum of two months of video storage,” Larson explains, “and because the majority of our stores are open 24 hours a day, there's a lot of activity to capture. There's hardly ever a time when we won't put at least 16 cameras on our surveillance systems. So memory is a huge issue for us.”

Knowing that storage capabilities would evolve as digital video security technology grew in popularity, Larson continued to monitor different DVR systems to stay on top of a variety of features and functions.

By 2003, he felt the timing was right to start switching out some of Coborn's existing tape-based CCTV systems to digital video. Hard-drive capacity had increased from about 60 GB to an impressive 300 GB and the top DVR systems had undergone significant video resolution, search, retrieval and recording enhancements.

That's when a regionally-based information solutions provider introduced Coborn's to networked DVR systems from March Networks™. The provider had already worked extensively with Coborn's IT group and took Larson to a nearby business in St. Cloud, Minnesota, that was using March Networks DVR hardware and software. Larson liked what he saw.

#### **Networked**

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With grocery, convenience, liquor and video stores located in five, upper Midwest states, the ability to remotely access live and archived video over the corporate network is critical to Larson's centralized loss prevention team. Although several stores, which operate under brand names including Coborn's, Cash Wise, Little Dukes and Save-A-Lot, are clustered in central Minnesota, others are as much as seven hours driving distance from Coborn's

corporate headquarters in St. Cloud.

Since selecting the March Networks systems, six 4000 Series DVRs have been installed in three of Coborn's larger grocery stores, which typically operate 20 to 40 cash registers each. The 4000 Series DVRs support up to 16 cameras, 12 optional audio channels, 16 alarm inputs, four alarm outputs, and up to 1.2 TB of internal storage.

At one site, however, the company opted for a March Networks 3108 DVR to provide coverage for a Coborn's liquor store located in the parking lot of a Coborn's grocery store. That DVR – which supports up to eight cameras, one audio and four alarm inputs, one alarm output and one internal hard-drive – is connected to the grocery store network via existing fiber optics. Larson's team is then able to access the 3108 DVR and the 4000 Series DVRs at the grocery store seamlessly via the corporate T1 network.

Over the next few years, Larson expects that the March Networks DVRs will be rolled out



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to all of Coborn's retail locations. In addition, he says, there are plans to install the systems in the company's bakery and deli production facilities and its grocery distribution center.

#### Multiple applications

Although the DVR systems are being used primarily for loss prevention investigations at present, Larson says it hasn't taken long for a number of his colleagues to identify how the system could help them with their daily work. Some district and store managers are already using the systems to monitor their stores for things like cleanliness.

“And down the road, I can also see us putting PTZ (pan-tilt-zoom) cameras in produce departments so our produce supervisor and buyer here at the office can go in and see how the displays look, check the appearance of the food and so on. I'm sure we will utilize that potential at some point in the future.”

In the interim, Larson says his loss prevention investigators are finding the DVR systems extremely useful and easy to use. “They're certainly happy about having this technology. I've had investigators sit down and figure out how to pull up video before we've even walked them through the software.”

Coborn's loss prevention investigators have turned to the DVR systems several times already to help resolve in-store issues. In one case, relates Larson, they were able to use

archived video to stop a man who had been taking beer off the shelves and drinking it on site. In another instance, Larson himself was able to quickly put evidence together to identify a customer who had stolen some money.

#### Time-saver

“I used the Viewer software on my desk to put the case together in about 30 minutes. If that store had still had our analog-based system, I would have had to call up the store, have someone make a copy of the tape for that day and send it to me via inner store mail. Then I would have had to search carefully through all the video footage to find what I needed. The whole process might have taken four or five days.

“The March Networks DVR system is certainly a time-saver. It takes that much less time to view an incident and it's immediate. I didn't have to wait for the tape to get here, which is a huge advantage.”

#### POS integration

The capabilities of the DVR systems will be further enhanced when Coborn's is ready to integrate its digital video information with transaction data from its point-of-sale (POS) systems using March Networks' Retail Suite software. Larson says the company is in the midst of upgrading its existing POS, but has begun some preliminary work with March Networks toward that integration. ❄

### Coborn's

Coborn's, Inc. owns and operates more than 80 grocery, convenience, liquor, and video stores, as well as pharmacies, throughout the upper Midwest under brand names including Coborn's, Cash Wise, Little Dukes and Save-A-Lot. In addition to its retail outlets, the St. Cloud, Minnesota-based retailer operates a central bakery, a central dry cleaning facility, a central commissary, a long-term care pharmacy, and its own grocery distribution center.

In 1999 Coborn's, Inc. was named one of the ten most generous companies in America in a recognition jointly sponsored by actor Paul Newman and *George* magazine, published by the late John F. Kennedy, Jr. In February 2003, the National Grocers Association named Coborn's the Best of Show in Merchandising winner at its annual convention in Las Vegas, NV.

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