Orange Uses Digital CCTV to Maximize Resources

FUTURE APPLICATIONS KEY TO SYSTEM SELECTION

With five engineers responsible for more than 100 technical environments spread throughout the United Kingdom (UK), Orange had a clear objective when it decided to install a digital CCTV system – to help those engineers proactively identify issues before they become a risk and reduce their commuting times.

THE mobile communications provider was also hoping to eventually migrate some of the analog-based CCTV systems its UK security staff uses for internal surveillance and monitoring to a digital system to capitalize on enhanced video search, retrieval and storage capabilities.

Following a thorough evaluation process, Orange concluded that a March Networks™ digital video recorder (DVR) system best met its requirements. Not only does the system enable access to live or archived video from any location over Orange's corporate network and offer a host of storage and user capabilities, it is also designed to support future integration with key voice and data applications.

"The ability to access recorded video remotely over an IP network with the March Networks system was quite an attractive proposition given the growing shift toward IP-based telephony networks," explains Glyn Wyatt, senior designer with Orange's network designs and systems integration group.

"In addition," he continues, "we saw this installation as quite a good opportunity to further develop our understanding of digital video surveillance and how it might integrate with potential future mobile products. Our focus is still on delivering voice services, but we are actively investigating other applications as well."

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Remote engineering

Since the system was installed in 2003, Orange's data centre and equipment room engineers can now view any location from their office or home – remotely and in real-time – using March Networks DVR Viewer software loaded onto their PCs. Most commonly, the engineers turn to the system to assist service technicians from other companies who are working onsite to resolve equipment issues.

In addition to the engineering group, several of Orange's security personnel have started using the digital system to help ensure the safety of staff and property at various locations. Wyatt says he expects that trend to continue, as the capabilities of the system become more apparent.

"The Orange security group has begun displacing their tape-based CCTV equipment to make way for the digital system and is already seeing the benefits."

Similar to the engineers, authorized security staff access live and archived video using viewer software loaded onto their front desk computers. The ability to configure and manage the DVR network itself, however, stays with specific users within the engineering group who are equipped with March Networks DVR Configuration Tool software.

And because the March Networks DVRs interoperate seamlessly with analog-based CCTV cameras and components, the system was easily connected to existing security surveillance and monitoring infrastructures.

Security staff using the digital CCTV system no longer have to worry about switching tapes on a regular basis or managing and storing those tapes for future access. Recorded video is stored electronically on hard-drives in the DVRs and is easily accessible over the corporate network for quick viewing and downloading of clips or still images. The reduced need for manual intervention is also a benefit for Orange's core infrastructure expansion and solution delivery teams.

"Obviously it's difficult to keep a system going where you have to change tapes," says Wyatt. "You've also got to store them all somewhere, and then there's the fact that tape-based units themselves have many moving parts that can break down. Consequently, the reliability and storage capability of digital CCTV systems, and in particular the March Networks systems, is quite good."

Future applications

At present, more than 50 March Networks DVRs are in use at Orange sites in Bristol, London, Banbury, Plymouth, Manchester, Darlington, Peterlee, North Tyneside, Hertford, Solihull and Belfast. The system was installed by integrator Bailey Telecom, an experienced voice and data communications provider and March Networks reseller that Orange works with regularly.

Damien Gifford, senior data centre and equipment room engineer with Orange's core infrastructure expansion group, says the system has helped his team work more effectively and resolve equipment issues promptly. The result is a higher overall standard of maintenance and even fewer issues involving critical corporate voice and data systems.

"There may be an inherent value as well in as much as downtime of damaged equipment may have been reduced by the fact that people know that there are cameras in these locations," he adds. ☀