

U.S. Bank Standardizes on DVRs for Retail Locations



Networked Systems Achieve Top Marks in Extensive Evaluation

Armed with a demanding list of performance criteria and an exhaustive product testing process that would take nine months to complete, U.S. Bank's corporate security team set to work in 2003 to identify the best DVR system for its retail locations.

THE immediate objective of the product evaluation, says security technical manager Todd Grinde, was to select a digital video surveillance and monitoring system to help secure more than 150 new branches – called instore locations – that the bank was opening in grocery stores owned by a major U.S. food retailer.

A longer-term goal, he says, was to settle on a standard DVR package to replace the analog-based CCTV systems the bank is currently using in more than 2,200 retail locations, at sites where a calculated return on investment justifies the changeout.

"Ultimately, we want to switch technologies from analog to digital video surveillance to better utilize our regionally-based investigative

teams," Grinde explains. "If an investigator is based in Portland, Oregon, for example, he can use a networked DVR system to remotely monitor banking branches in California or southern Washington, and immediately access video evidence from any networked DVR over our secure wide area network. He saves time traveling and no longer has to send VHS tapes back and forth."

High performance

In order to achieve those efficiencies, however, U.S. Bank needed a DVR system that was highly reliable, performed well in the bank's network environment, was easy for administrators to configure and maintain, and was equally straightforward for investigators to use.

"We landed on the March Networks™ DVR system after considerable testing," Grinde says. "There were several things about the DVR that stood out. The quality of the engineering was probably one of the leading factors in our decision.

"The unit also received very high marks in our network Q&A testing," he continues, "mainly because of the efficiency of its bandwidth and packet sizing utilization. Right now I have a set limit on our network to use for this application, so the ability to throttle bandwidth is extremely important."

U.S. Bank is already using March Networks™ 3000 Series DVRs at 10 of its instore locations and will have another 30 installed in branches shortly. Grinde says the 3000 Series

DVRs are ideal for locations that require eight cameras or less, while the March Networks 4000 Series DVRs, which support 16 cameras and offer recording rates of 60 to 240 frames per second, will likely be installed at locations with larger footprints.

Centralized management

Investigators will use PC-based viewing software to remotely access archived video from any DVR on the corporate network, while system administrators at U.S. Bank's central control centers in Portland, Oregon, and St. Paul, Minnesota, will handle system configuration, management and maintenance. Each center is online backup for the other.

Grinde notes that the ability to closely monitor the operational status of the entire DVR system from the two, centralized locations was another item on his criteria list.

"A big advantage of the March Networks DVRs was their built-in health checks, which let us know immediately if a unit is not operating properly so we can take corrective actions. With our VCRs, we may not know there's a problem until an incident is missed or we find that the recording quality is not acceptable. So the health system was a big factor for us."

And, similar to many network devices, March Networks DVRs can only be configured and managed via a network connection – making them virtually tamperproof.

"I didn't want any user intervention at the branch levels," says Grinde. "The remote access design really provides that level of protection."

Case clearance

Grinde says the investigative teams are anxious to start using the DVR system and expect it to help them increase their case clearance rates.

It has already proven its capabilities in a real-life situation, he adds.

"Within a week of putting the March Networks test unit in a branch here, we did have a robbery. I was notified of the incident and had images of the bad guy in less than 10 minutes. We didn't need to provide them to law enforcement because he was arrested shortly thereafter, but it did demonstrate the value of the system."*



A Snapshot of U.S. Bank's Evaluation Process

There are hundreds of DVR systems on the market today, offering varying degrees of performance, management and networking capabilities. To help sort through the competitive landscape, U.S. Bank's corporate security team conducted an extensive evaluation process to find the best DVR system for its retail locations. Below is a brief summary of that detailed process.

Phase One: Product Research

Preliminary product research included content gathering through national trade-shows, security publications, discussions with trusted communications equipment suppliers, website and Internet searches and word of mouth, resulting in an initial consideration of roughly 10 DVR systems from leading manufacturers.

Phase Two: Lab Testing

After narrowing the field down further, five DVR systems were brought into U.S. Bank's lab environment for physical testing, which included testing of video quality and performance, storage capabilities, product engineering, reliability,

serviceability, ease of installation and setup, and software capabilities and intuitiveness.

Phase Three: Network Q&A

All DVR units were then assessed by U.S. Bank's network quality and assurance department to ensure they were authorized to run over the corporate network. Two systems were eliminated at this stage.

Phase Four: Live Branch Testing

The remaining three DVR systems were installed in a live retail branch location and further tested for network performance and storage capabilities. A panel representing internal security groups such as project managers, investigators, management and technicians was asked to assess the systems. Some were also asked to install and/or use the software without manuals or training, to determine how intuitive the systems actually were for users. Following this "blind" testing, a final decision was made to select the March Networks DVR system based on its high overall performance.

U.S. Bank

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