Garden Centres Trim Losses with Searchlight

FLOWER POWER GARDEN CENTRES, an Australian retailer with 10 locations in the Sydney Metropolitan Area, took a major step toward managing its point-of-sale losses when it acquired a March Networks Searchlight™ for Retail software solution.

Searchlight integrates Flower Power's March Networks® video surveillance with transaction data from the retailer's point-of-sale systems, allowing Audit and Loss Prevention Manager Joshua Nicol to review reports of potentially suspicious transactions and immediately click through to the corresponding video.

"The Searchlight reports point me in the direction I want to focus on and give me a great overview of the transactions that have occurred," said Nicol. "I can review refunds and voids, as well as sales under or over a certain amount, or identify training opportunities for cashiers handling certain types of transactions. Searchlight is an absolutely fantastic tool for identifying fraudulent patterns and trends."

Finding losses from theft and fraud is critical for retailers like Flower Power. According to the 2014-2015 Global Retail Theft Barometer study, shoplifting and employee theft cost Australian retailers US $2.44 billion, or just above one percent of sales. Globally, employee theft accounted for 39 percent of total losses and shoplifting 38 percent, with the remainder attributed to administrative or non-criminal losses. ▶

CASE STUDY: FLOWER POWER GARDEN CENTRES

Flower Power Garden Centres was founded in 1958 by Nick Sammut, a penniless immigrant from Malta with a strong work ethic and a green thumb. Today, said Nicol, it's a thriving family enterprise selling a wide range of flowers, trees, ornamental plants, patio furniture, barbeques, "and pretty much anything and everything to do with the outdoors from a garden perspective."

Nicol was familiar with March Networks video surveillance technology prior to joining Flower Power in September 2015.

"I used March Networks for years at a previous employer — a large retail company. I found it easy to navigate and was impressed with its functionality, but the addition of Searchlight makes the March Networks system even more powerful because of the time it saves searching for video of refunds, voids and other transactions."

Flower Power Garden Centres is in the final stages of transitioning to March Networks 8000 Series Hybrid NVRs and March Networks IP cameras.

The hybrid capacity of the March Networks recorders is ideal because it allows the garden centre chain to transition to IP over time instead of forcing it into a costly upfront infrastructure upgrade.

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— **Joshua Nicol,** Audit and Loss Prevention Manager, Flower Power Garden Centres

The video solution runs on March Networks Command™ Enterprise video management software. The powerful software features advanced video search tools, including a motion histogram that highlights movement and a Visual Finder bar with thumbnail images that speed the user through the timeline to the required video evidence. Command also enables centralized user management and mass configuration, as well as real-time health monitoring that alerts system administrators to potential performance issues.

Managers of the individual garden centres can search for video recorded by cameras in their own stores, but Nicol alone has access to the Searchlight reports.

Staff from March Networks' Sydney office provided initial training, and Flower Power managers requiring a refresher tune into March Networks' online training videos.

"Ease-of-use is important — especially for the managers in our garden centres who aren't in the system every day," said Nicol. "The March Networks system is easy to jump into even if you haven't used it for a while."

Nicol can access video from any of the 10 garden centres in Sydney and its surrounding communities from Flower Power's Sydney head office, or while on the road or at home.

"I can review live or archived video from anywhere, anytime on my laptop using virtual private network access as long as I have a WiFi connection," he said. ▶

Command Enterprise software also allows users to access video on their smartphones or tablets with an optional March Networks Cloud service. Simple to set up and use, March Networks Cloud requires no transcoding hardware installation, router port forwarding, firewall changes or software downloads.

In addition to alerting Nicol to point-of-sale anomalies, the March Networks video solution also provides evidence for prosecution of thieves.

"We had several break-and-enters last year — three in our garden centres and another three in a wholesale location," he recalled. "In one instance, they came in at night — sometime between midnight and 5 am, had free range of the entire nursery and got away with several thousand dollars worth of merchandise. Fortunately, the video evidence we captured with our March Networks system helped with the police investigation and was instrumental in their arrest."

Video surveillance can play an important role in reducing the $2.44 billion in estimated annual losses from shoplifting and employee theft in Australia, but some solutions get the job done better than others.

Flower Power Garden Centres is happy with the choice it has made.

"I would definitely recommend March Networks technology for its reliability, ease-of-use and powerful Searchlight functionality, which takes so much of the legwork out of monitoring point-of-sale transactions," said Nicol. ▼

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