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See the World Through IP VideoThe Internet plays a critical role in helping companies stay protected.

By Bob Bennett

From e-mail to instant messaging to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), the Internet has revolutionized the way we communicate. The trend continues with the latest innovation spawned by the Internet-IP video.

IP video connects cameras to the Internet so you can view just about anything you want from any location around the world in real time. As you might imagine, IP video is having a tremendous impact on the video security surveillance industry. Companies want to protect their most important assets, and IP-based video technology gives them the power to do that at the click of a button.

Real Time Video
Historically, video surveillance was based on analog technology, closed circuit television and recorded on videotapes. Although it served the purpose of capturing what was going on, it didn't transmit live information. Therefore, it wasn't practical for monitoring facilities such as warehouses, factories, offices, daycare centers, schools, retail stores and banks.

With the Internet revolution and the increasing presence of local area networks, technology made great strides in video surveillance in the 1990s. Digital technology meant that video surveillance could go live over the Internet and provide clearer, crisper images.

There are a variety of cameras, including basic black and white, high-resolution color and even night vision. Remotely controlled cameras can pan, tilt and zoom.

Here's how it works: A digital camera broadcasts the video images to a server where software gives the company the ability to record, display or re-transmit the images anywhere in the world. Depending on the type of software installed, it may analyze data and select specific items to watch, making it a customizable security tool.

The newest technology leverages greater bandwidth and provides greater data mining features and information retrieval. If security is an issue, full digital surveillance offers the added advantage of data encryption to protect against image tampering. The most important part of any quest for a technology solution is choosing the provider that will give you the greatest satisfaction. Getting the right expertise outweighs investing in a more costly or popular brand.

Remote Monitoring
IP-based technology provides a good value both monetarily and in terms of security. Internet surveillance makes sense for remote monitoring of multiple locations and for remote recording of data onto back-up servers and hard disks for long-term storage. Because many businesses already have a high-speed IP network, adding IP video simply leverages the same infrastructure to include video functionality. Systems are easy to set up and configure, unlike traditional analog video systems, which require dedicated point-to-point cabling and more expensive installation, expansion and maintenance.

Video surveillance systems can be used for theft prevention, monitoring premises and/or employees, after hours security, and so on. Cameras can be set up to view almost anything, including a front door, back door, parking lot, offices or warehouse. Internet video provides the ability to view a site from anyplace in the world through a Web browser with high-speed connection. The quality and detail of the image, and the coverage area depends on the camera equipment.

Wide Range of Uses
Companies in any industry can benefit from IP video. In the banking and finance sector, institutions can easily and effectively manage multiple locations. IP-based technology is ideal for trouble spots such as ATMs and drive-up windows. Manufacturing and industrial companies can use the tool to manage quality, safety and control. IP video can be used to focus on critical points of the production line to increase productivity and avoid problems.

Small family-owned stores to large retailers rely on this tool to reduce the potential for damage and theft, as well as capture workplace injury and employee harassment. Daycare centers are using the technology to ensure the safety of children. Some even offer parents the opportunity to view the daycare environment and check on their kids through the Internet. These are just a few examples of how IP-based surveillance systems reduce costs and increase productivity and profitability.

Companies can use IP-based surveillance systems to monitor shoplifters and dishonest employees, compile recorded evidence against false accident claims and monitor merchandising displays in stores that may be hundreds of miles away. Manufacturers, governments, hospitals and universities use IP video surveillance to identify visitors and employees, monitor hazardous work areas, thwart theft and ensure the security of their premises and parking facilities-all

done in real time.

IP video is the latest technology made possible by the Internet. Companies can use this new tool to bring greater safety and security to their business locations.

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