

Columbia Bank



Industry

Financial Institutions

Location

Tacoma, Washington, United States

Products

Security Center, Omnicast, Federation, Plan Manager

Partners

Cook Security Group Inc., Axis Communications, Digital Monitoring Products, Samsung, Vivotek

How a community bank cashes in on centralized IP video to secure 150 branches

Since 1993, Columbia Bank has been putting people first. What began as a single community bank has now grown into 150 branches spread throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho in the United States. The bank provides a broad range of financial solutions and expertise to businesses and individuals. The company is also committed to offering services and supporting programs that help build stronger communities. It's why Columbia Bank uses the latest and most robust security technology to protect assets, clients, and staff, and help keep neighborhoods safe.

Challenges – The frustrations of technology that can't evolve

When Columbia Bank decided to install higher-resolution IP cameras in a few branches, the security team discovered their existing video solution couldn't support the new devices. They turned to the manufacturer for help, who was unable to provide an adequate solution. The team also discovered that the current system used embedded software, which was not upgradable or compliant with internal IT policies. Columbia Bank knew a highly scalable open software platform was necessary to meet future growth and wanted to partner with a vendor that stayed on top of leading security trends.

Solution – Standardizing on unified security across all branches

Today, the Columbia Bank security team manages over 1200 IP cameras across 60+ locations using Genetec™ Security Center. With support from their integrator, Cook Security Group Inc., the bank knew that Security Center would easily allow them to evolve operations over time, with devices of their choice. Today, regional security managers monitor both video and intrusion detection alarms across several locations from a single unified solution. From an intuitive map interface, they receive instant alerts to real-time issues which they address faster than ever before. In keeping with their core values, the team also works closely with law enforcement to foster safer communities.

Columbia Bank oversees security across 60+ branch locations using Genetec Security Center

At Columbia Bank, the upgrade to Security Center is happening one branch at a time. To date, over 60 locations are now running the unified platform with the Security Center Omnicast™ video surveillance system. The bank installed their own servers and chose a mix of cameras from Axis Communications, Samsung, and Vivotek. When the upgrade is complete, the security team will have access to 4,000 cameras across all 150 branches and offices.

The security platform provides easy system access to regional security managers who monitor alarms and video within their territory from remote offices. This was enabled with the Federation™ feature, which allows users with varying levels of privileges to access all branch systems from a single location.

“Security Center has allowed me to scale, without having to increase the size of my department dramatically. That’s huge from a cost perspective. We are working more efficiently than ever before, in terms of how we monitor and maintain our security systems,” said Ross Armstrong, Vice President of Physical Security at Columbia Bank.

Managing video and intrusion from one platform

Within the security platform, video is unified with the bank’s Digital Monitoring Products (DMP) intrusion detection system. This allows the security team to receive intrusion alarms alongside live video to quickly see what’s happening.

“Security Center immediately alerts us to any real-time issues. In the past, the police would have been dispatched immediately following an incident, but our team may have been notified 5-10 minutes later. Now, if an intrusion alarm goes off or a teller presses the panic button, video of the event will automatically come up on our monitors. The system also emails our users an event notification with a video snapshot attached. This ensures that no matter where we are, we can respond quickly,” explained Armstrong.

With such ease of access to video, Columbia Bank is also helping to strengthen community safety. Since installing Security Center, the bank has been able to provide video evidence to law enforcement for various incidents involving nearby shootings, burglaries at neighboring businesses, and near-fatal traffic accidents on adjacent roadways.

“Before the Genetec system, we only knew whether our intrusion devices were working correctly every 30 days. Now, we know in less than 24 hours. Not only are we better securing our sites, but our business management team loves this because we’re operating more efficiently and extending savings to the company.”



An intuitive map interface for any skill level

The security team works in Plan Manager, the map interface of Security Center, to speed up response and investigations. Since every branch is unique, the visual layout helps users find camera views and intrusion alarm points faster. Other departments such as the fraud team benefit too.

“Our fraud team handles many cases regarding identify theft and elder abuse. While they have access to the system, they aren’t always familiar with where the cameras are located. With a map interface and simple time-based search functionalities, it’s easier for them to find and extract video evidence and get it over to law enforcement,” said Armstrong.

With very little training, other departments have learned how to easily navigate the system too. For instance, the facilities team view video to validate if contracted work was completed on time and to their standards. They’re also considering using the video system as a cost-effective means to remotely determine if a branch needs an interior refresh such as new signage, carpeting, or furniture.

“We are finding so many uses for the video surveillance system that we didn’t initially consider. For instance, there are laws requiring certain levels of lighting around ATMs, so we’re using the system to check whether outdoor lighting is adequate. From a liability perspective, we can also see whether our contracted vendors such as landscaping and snow removal companies are doing a good job to reduce the potential for any slips or accidents outside our branches,” explained Armstrong.



Faster maintenance extends huge savings

Every morning, the regional managers open a task in Security Center that gives them a quick snapshot of intrusion device statuses. They quickly filter the list to see which devices are having issues. Then, they go directly to the map interface to see where a specific device is located and address the issue before it leads to bigger risks.

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Banking on more unification

When the upgrade is complete, the team wants to tackle the next phase— unifying the existing fire alarm and access control systems into the platform. The bank is also reviewing the benefit of adding Security Center AutoVu™ automatic license plate recognition cameras to the entrances of branch lots in busy downtown locations. This will allow the retail team to discreetly identify repeated abuse of reserved customer parking spots.

“Genetec not only provides top-notch support, but we know that they are a company who leads the way with the latest security trends. Security Center is an intuitive solution that allows us to monitor all our systems from one platform and gives us the freedom to evolve our system exactly how we want to. From a security and operational perspective, our team is more effective and adding greater value to the business, while also extending these perks to the communities around us,” concluded Armstrong.