

Case Study

Homemakers Furniture

Retail furniture business takes technological leap to IP with Security Center



Largest furniture store in the state of Iowa selects Omnicast IP video surveillance from Genetec Security Center to simplify investigations and improve service

Business challenge

Since opening its doors in 1974 in Des Moines, Iowa, Homemakers Furniture has become one of the largest furniture stores in the country. Today, the company has about 500,000 square feet of retail space encompassing a showroom, warehouse and administration office. While Homemakers has room to house a vast selection of home furnishings and décor, the sheer size and height of its facility present challenges in keeping its expansive store safe and secure.

Although the company had maintained an older analog digital video recorder (DVR) system which provided video surveillance to select-but-limited locations, the footage was grainy, and over time, the system had become unreliable. Searching for video was cumbersome since the system was spread across eight disparate DVRs, and video archive retention was limited to a few days. Co-ax cabling and proprietary hardware requirements also inhibited the scalability of the system when more cameras were needed.

In the midst of a network infrastructure upgrade, Ryan Gerth, Technical Systems Manager at Homemakers Furniture, started looking for a more efficient security solution. Gerth wanted a modern IP video surveillance system that would provide higher resolution video and better system management capabilities with a scalable and robust back-end. After doing his own market research, Gerth turned to Prime Communications, a certified security solutions provider, who proposed Genetec Security Center, a unified security platform that includes video surveillance, access control and license plate recognition under one platform.

According to Gerth, “We looked at other vendor solutions, but we felt Security Center was the best choice price-wise and technology-wise in terms of the capabilities it offered. Also, knowing that we could add the access control system later, and benefit from multiple systems running under the same management platform was a major advantage.”

Omnicast heightens efficiency within infrastructure and investigations

Today, the Omnicast IP video surveillance system of Security Center manages approximately 170 network cameras from Axis Communications. As a Genetec-certified partner, Prime Communications provided a detailed system design and layout, including a 3D rendering, prior to the system implementation to ensure expectations were clear from the onset.

Summary

Client name: Homemakers Furniture

Organization size: 320 employees

Industry: Retail

Location: Iowa, USA

Products: Security Center, Omnicast

Partners: Prime Communications, Axis Communications

From an IT standpoint, the innate flexibility of Omnicast helped Homemakers Furniture simplify archiving and maximize bandwidth. According to Gerth, “Since Omnicast can be implemented in a virtual environment; we have been able to eliminate two full server racks of video equipment.” To save on bandwidth, the company setup on-motion recording for its cameras, but during opening hours, some cameras are set to constantly record video to protect sensitive areas.

Quick and easy access to recorded video within Omnicast has helped to expedite investigations. Within a week of installation, a subcontractor had reported some tools missing from his truck. Gerth was able to quickly review the video to validate that the contractor was the only person accessing the vehicle parked in the lot. With clear evidence, Homemakers Furniture helped the contractor determine that the tools were actually left at a previous job, and avoided any unnecessary liability claims.

“Using Omnicast for investigations consumes far less time to find what we are looking for, save it on a disk and send it off to the proper parties,” said Gerth. “Unlike the old analog system where we had to connect to individual DVRs to find video, all of our cameras are right there in a pool. We can search by dates and times, and fast-forward and rewind with the click of a mouse; all of it is smooth and easy.”

Extending efficiency today and tomorrow

While Gerth does handle some investigations himself, a lot that time has been freed up by key staff and management who conduct their own departmental investigations. This was facilitated by comprehensive operator training given by Prime Communications,

and the system privileges and permissions in Omnicast that let Gerth restrict access to certain cameras and simplify the interface for specific user functions. “Since the system is so easy to use, management has been taking care of investigations themselves. That takes time off my hands which is extremely valuable,” explained Gerth.

Sometime in the near future, Homemakers wants to implement a mobile client so Gerth can easily adjust configurations and views directly at camera locations from his iPhone. Homemakers also wants to gradually expand with more cameras in the warehouse and add Synergis, the access control system of Security Center, to secure server room doors and other key office areas.

Right now, Homemakers Furniture could not be more pleased with their choice in Prime Communications and Genetec, as Gerth concluded: “Not only did we receive excellent service from design and install, to training and maintenance; Security Center has been extremely reliable, easy to maintain, and simple for our users with varied levels of experience to operate. Thanks to Security Center, we have better visibility of our business.”

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Infrastructure at a Glance

Homemakers Furniture selected IP cameras from Axis Communications, specifically AXIS M3203 and AXIS M3204 Fixed Dome Network Camera for inside, and M1113-E and M1114-E Fixed Network Cameras with outdoor-ready enclosures for outside. On the same rack, two virtual machines run the server infrastructure and a disk array of 42TB of storage is available on the SAN. Some camera recordings are kept for 30 days, while other customer-facing cameras have a retention period of 120 days.