IP video security for casinos is no bluff.

Players Casino upgrades to the increased functionality of digital video surveillance with Axis network cameras and video encoders.

Organization:
Players Casino

Location:
Ventura, California, USA

Industry segment:
Casinos/Gaming

Application:
Casino safety and security

Axis partners:
CCS, OnSSI

Mission

The gaming industry faces a number of security challenges including theft, cheating, and liability risks. Additionally, gaming surveillance is highly regulated by the government. This means flexible, high resolution surveillance solutions are critical. When Ventura, California-based Players Casino relocated in 2011, they installed a traditional analog system to watch over their card table games. Yet, when planning for the second phase of construction, they saw value in upgrading to an IP-based solution in order to capture more detail and achieve greater control over their cameras.

Solution

California-based systems integrator and Axis partner Customized Contractor Services (CCS) recommended Players Casino build their IP solution with Axis network cameras and Axis video encoders. CCS installed discrete fixed dome cameras with HDTV-quality resolution above each card table in their new wing. They also installed high resolution HDTV 1080p cameras with digital zoom at strategic locations for more comprehensive views of the rooms and existing tables.

Additionally, they upgraded their existing analog cameras with IP functionality using Axis video encoders and installed an OnSSI Ocularis video management system (VMS) to manage the unified system. CCS incorporated a number of high availability measures to ensure system reliability and achieve a level of redundancy that is not available with traditional DVRs.

Result

Players Casino now has a smart, responsive, and easily managed video surveillance system. HDTV-quality Axis cameras allow their security team to see faces, cards, and chips in clear detail. The cameras' ease of installation and scalability means they can add new cameras in difficult-to-reach locations as needed. With network-based AXIS Camera Management and OnSSI VMS tools, the casino can make critical adjustments without blocking off floor space and disturbing customers. They are also able to respond quickly to many regulation changes with minimal fuss.

AXIS COMMUNICATIONS

> **"Compared to an analog camera, a high resolution IP camera makes it a lot easier to decipher hand movements, the colors of the chips, the suits of the cards, and other details. With the three mega-pixel overview cameras, the resolution is so high that you can zoom in and make out a face or see what kind of clothes a person is wearing."**
>
> F. Michel Velo, IT Director, Players Casino.

Upping the ante from analog to digital

Players Casino is a Ventura, California-based gaming facility which specializes in card games like poker and blackjack. With an average of 200 people at the tables at any time, the casino's security team needed an effective video surveillance system to stay vigilant against theft, cheating, and liability risks.

Players Casino brought in Long Beach, California-based systems integrator and Axis partner Customized Contractor Services (CCS) to design and implement their security system. During the first phase of construction in 2011, CCS relied on analog cameras. Yet, when Players expanded their card room, they wanted to take advantage of the increased functionality offered by network video, including the ability to perform maintenance remotely, obtain HDTV-quality video, and scale the system without limit as they grow.

The casino chose Axis network cameras for their new addition and elected to upgrade their initial analog investment with Axis video encoders. The entire system could now be controlled through the OnSSI Ocularis VMS, and the analog cameras would have much of the same flexibility as the IP cameras.

"IP makes it infinitely easier to manage our system—to correct our cameras, to re-angle them, to do maintenance, refocus, change color. In the past with analog, you would have to get up on a ladder and unscrew them. Now you can just grab your laptop and log in to the camera. The only time you would need a ladder is when you physically need to move the camera somewhere else," said F. Michel Velo, IT Director, Players Casino.

Doubling down on security

Per California law, every card table is required to have a camera above it. For the new wing, Players Casino selected compact AXIS P3344 Fixed Dome Network Cameras which provide one megapixel resolution to see the faces of players and cards clearly. The casino also employs three megapixel AXIS P3346 Fixed Dome Network Cameras for more general overviews of the rooms.

To upgrade their existing analog cameras, Players Casino used an AXIS Q7900 Video Encoder Rack equipped with AXIS P7224 Video Encoder Blades to enable those cameras with IP functionality. The system is managed through OnSSI's Ocularis VMS and recorded on custom built servers. The Ocularis software makes operation of the system easy and user-friendly, and it reduces the amount of training needed to manage the cameras. Per law, cameras are set to record continuously 24 hours per day, and the video is monitored live around the clock. Should an incident require further investigation, security staff can quickly access archived video through the Ocularis VMS and perform forensic analysis.

IP is casinos' ace-in-the-hole

Ryan Gleason, Project Manager for CCS, stressed that close cooperation between the IT and security department is key to a successful installation in the gaming industry. Because the roles have traditionally been separate, the departments must work to create a transparent plan to manage the system, Gleason said. However, the benefits are clear.

"You can greatly reduce the number of blind spots simply by using megapixel cameras," Gleason said. "Additionally, casinos tend to have high ceilings and many cameras. With an IP system, you can make adjustments and changes from the office without sending out a technician and blocking off a section of the floor."

As the gaming industry is highly regulated, an IP-based surveillance system also provides a quick and cost-effective method to respond quickly to changes in state regulations. Often, maintaining compliance can be as seamless as requesting a software update from the VMS provider.

"It is not always that simple, but sometimes it can be," said Gleason. "Being able to maintain compliance with a simple software update, I would say, is a pretty big driving factor for most gaming installations."