Network of gas stations use Axis cameras to implement a new business model in Brazil.

The Posto Túlio chain of gas stations is the first in the country to use cameras to monitor the entry and exit of vehicles, and charge trucks for prolonged stays.

Organization:
Posto Túlio Gas Stations

Location:
Southern Brazil

Industry segment:
Retail

Application:
Safety and security, license plate recognition, merchandising and operations

Axis partners:
Sigmafone, Digifort, Anixter

Mission

Vehicles can enter gas stations on the Brazilian highways indiscriminately, and stay as long as they like. Drivers can spend the night if they want to, without paying anything. The gas station management can do very little when a driver complains of a theft in the area, which increases the value of insurance charged for transport. Faced with this long-standing problem, the Túlio chain of gas stations, located in the States of Rio Grande do Sul and Parana, in southern Brazil, has discovered that the solution may lie in technology.

Solution

The gas station network approached the Sigmafone team, a local integrator specializing in IT and CCTV. The project consisted of equipping entry and exit gates at each gas station with a high-definition camera that captures images of license plates. All the HDTV cameras are from Axis Communications. The images are managed by the software Digifort, an Axis partner, which record entry and exit times and create an interface with the CRM of the gas station.

The whole external area of the gas stations is monitored by fixed AXIS P3344 Network Cameras, with a total of 42 units with HDTV quality. On completion of the project, there will be a total of 62, of this model alone. 25 AXIS M3011 Network Cameras were installed for the internal areas, like the convenience stores. For reading license plates at the entry and exit points, another 15 AXIS M3011 Network Cameras were installed, all with H.264 video compression standard.

Result

Once it is 100% completed, the Posto Túlio project will become the biggest CCTV project of Sigmafone, with the collaboration of IP cameras. "Axis has a range of qualities that enable this project to provide what we want, which is to achieve imaging monitoring in HD, integrated with the RFID process," said Márcio Augusto Marques, accounts manager.

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"Throughout the project, we discovered all the potential we had at our disposal, based on the IP technology. Today, we are completely satisfied with the choice."

Giovanni Pasa, administrative and financial director of the chain of Túlio gas stations.

Integration

With the project in place, the management of the gas station is able to charge for overnight stays of trucks, for example, or offer advantages to registered clients through the use of RFID technology. "It is now possible to offer a bonus for drivers who refuel at the gas station, which can be used in the convenience store," explained Giovanni Pasa, administrative and financial director of the Túlio chain of gas stations. The new pumps have a reader that only release fuel when the RFID card is swiped in front of them. The integration of the project enables the gas station management to use all its creativity to improve service and generate new income. "We have a points system. On refueling, the truck driver receives a proportional bonus, which can be converted into products purchased within the gas station," said Giovanni. The main benefit, however, is security. "The customers know the risks they run in unsafe places, and may opt for the gas station where they feel they will be less susceptible to problems of this type," he added.

For the Sigmafone integrator, this "meant one of our best cases in CCTV", in the words of Márcio Augusto Marques, accounts manager. Besides meeting other demands in terms of network infrastructure, Sigmafone carried out the CCTV project for the six gas stations in the chain.

Change in the business model

In Brazil, transport companies usually hire cargo insurance to offer some guarantees to the shipper. This security is the responsibility of risk managers, who monitor the route of the truck and analyze the level of danger on the route. It is the risk manager who authorizes trucks to stop at certain points along the route (which is done through tracking via satellite) and who can require that stops only be made at gas stations where there is greater safety for cargos, vehicle, and their drivers. "Our objective is to provide the risk manager information on the arrival and exit times and movement of trucks inside the yard." In other words: The project is not restricted to monitoring, but includes the whole area of managing access to the gas stations. Using a code provided by the gas station, risk managers can access the images, each

time their truck passes through one of the stations in the network. They will also have more information if any event occurs," observes Giovanni, who hopes to increase revenues through the provision of this new service. For Márcio of Sigmafone, the idea is an innovative one. "The network will give total security over all that takes place in the transport route, offering this as a service to companies. It is a totally innovative idea, and shows how technology can influence business".

Discovering Axis

Initially, tests were carried out using analog cameras. The pilot project cost R\$ 40,000. "But the analog cameras are much more susceptible to poor weather conditions," said Giovanni. "As the connection was not fiberoptic, and because we have a lot of problems with lightning in the region, the cameras were burning up easily. We saw that the cost of implementing analog cameras is lower than that of IP, but the maintenance costs are much higher," he said. "So we reached the conclusion that that was not the most appropriate technology for our requirements.

In the beginning, the director of the Posto Túlio network did not know about Axis. After initial contact with competing manufacturers, Sigmafone presented a camera that Axis had granted for an exclusive demonstration. "As this is a state-of-the-art project, and Axis was the company that invented network cameras, I decided to analyze its performance," said Giovanni. "One of the factors that led to our choice of Axis was the wide range of cameras, with a more firmly grounded, more mature solution in the market. We also found that Axis had the best cost-to-benefit ratio, particularly due to the long life-span of the products," he added. Giovanni continued, "We don't want to be held captive to any particular software. The proprietary system was practically a requirement of one of the most well-known manufacturers of analog cameras." Another factor that was instrumental in the choice of Axis was the fact that the importing process through other manufacturers is, according to Giovanni, "very slow". "Axis had the models we wanted, ready to deliver, through Anixter, which made the process a great deal simpler."

"All the market research, and the practical demo we conducted with the camera granted by Axis for that purpose, brought more credibility and weighed in our choice of final customer," said Márcio Augusto Marques, accounts manager of Sigmafone.

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