

Watching the games people play.

Choctaw Nation casinos use Axis network cameras to follow the money.



Organization:
Choctaw Nation of
Oklahoma

Location:
Southeastern Oklahoma,
USA

Industry segment:
Casino/Gaming

Application:
Back of house and floor
surveillance

Axis partners:
Connects IT, Genetec

Mission

As the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma began to expand its casino operations, tribal leaders realized that many of their facilities had outgrown the limitations of their existing analog surveillance technology. In looking to modernize their security system, they sought an open IP-based solution that would provide secure, evidentiary-quality video recordings, operate at 30 frames per second and would be easy to set up and expand without major expense or disruption of gaming activity.

Solution

Choctaw Nation's own onsite team worked with Axis partners – ConnectionsIT of Santa Rosa, California and CameraWatch Technologies of Jackson, Mississippi – to install an array of Axis fixed dome and pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) network cameras on the casinos' fiber backbone. The Axis cameras monitor back of house hallways and money areas as well as building exteriors, parking lots and high-stakes gaming areas.

Several of the casinos manage the Axis network cameras with a universal video management system from UK-based software company Petards, while others use the fully integrated IP video management and access control solutions, Omnicast and Synergis, from Canada-based Genetec. In both cases, the systems allow operators to change camera settings through the network, avoiding disruption of business operations where the cameras are deployed.

Result

Security teams monitor the cameras 24/7 from surveillance rooms on the casino properties, enabling them to immediately respond to any incidents of theft, customer safety or questionable behavior by patrons or employees. As word spreads of the new surveillance systems, tribal leaders are noting a significant drop in fraudulent slip-and-fall claims and shortages at the tables and the tills.

"Axis network cameras give us the image clarity and easy scalability we need to protect our growing casino operations."

Paula Penz, gaming commissioner for the Choctaw Nation.

Addressing the limitations of legacy technology

The Choctaw casinos' legacy analog cameras were becoming a hindrance in working with local law enforcement. The images they captured were of insufficient resolution to be acceptable in court. And because the images were being recorded on VCR tape, they wore out over time, creating difficulties for security teams who had to play back video repeatedly over several days or weeks during an investigation.

"Casino security needs advanced cameras that will capture the details of a card, a ticket, the number of chips thrown on a table or under one's hand," explained Paula Penz, gaming commissioner for the Choctaw Nation, the third largest Native American tribe in the United States. "Axis network cameras produce excellent quality, resolution and clarity – which are essential for our business."

Another important feature of the Axis technology was the ability for the network cameras to operate at 30 frames per second, a standard that exceeded the guidelines set by the National Indian Gaming Commission. Other criteria that favored Axis network cameras were their support of Power-over-Ethernet which allowed the casinos to save installation costs by using a single cable to both power the cameras and transmit the video over the network. In addition, the selection committee valued that the Axis network cameras supported both MJPEG and H.264 advanced compression at a full 30 fps, allowing casinos to affordably maintain 14 days of archival storage.

To date, the Choctaw Nation has replaced all the analog cameras on the floor and back of house with Axis network cameras in its Pocola, Oklahoma casino. Choctaw is also using Axis network cameras in the back of house, money areas and on the floor of the Broken Bow, Stringtown, McAlester and Grant casinos as well as at its Durant Casino Resort. With casino renovations and expansions underway, as well construction of four new facilities by the end of 2010, Choctaw Nation expects to deploy more than 3,000 Axis network cameras in its gaming operations.

Handling ever-changing light levels

Another challenge in the deployment was the extreme light level variations typical of casino environments – everything from dimly lit areas to flashing signs and neon lights. "We wanted surveillance cameras that could react quickly to lighting changes without compromising image quality," shared Jason Pritchard, integrations manager for the Choctaw Nation's Onsite Solutions group.

The Choctaw Nation chose AXIS 216FD Network Cameras with advanced image processing that delivers crisp images in low lighting as well as glaring brightness. The automatic iris control changes the lens aperture to maintain optimum light level to the image sensor.

The casinos also deployed AXIS P3301 Fixed Dome Network Cameras with H.264 compression and built-in, 2-way audio capability, including an audio detection alarm that allows for real-time communication with patrons, staff or intruders. "This feature eliminates the cost of installing separate cabling for microphones in the cash booths," said Pritchard.

Several casinos also use AXIS 231D+ and AXIS 233D PTZ Dome Network Cameras for broader coverage of high-stakes gaming areas, parking lots and general floor activity. The newest Durant Resort Casino continues to embrace high-performance surveillance in its 4-story parking garage with AXIS P3343 Fixed Dome Network Cameras, which come equipped with many advanced functions including true day and night capabilities.

Deterring fraud and crime

"We are focused on protecting our assets and ensuring the safety of our staff and customers," stated Paula Penz. With the Axis network cameras in place, the casinos have been able to address slip and fall incidents and other insurance claims with high-quality video documentation that can be entered in evidence whether in tribal, district or federal court. The Axis network cameras have also augmented efforts by casino security guards to deter employee and patron theft and other illegal activity that directly impact the bottom line.



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