A CLEAR2THERE CASE STUDY

SMART BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY ELEVATES SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR AGRIBUSINESS OPERATION

Parker Ag Innovations, a seed and chemical distributor located in Emerson, Iowa, was looking to improve oversight of its warehouse operations with the addition of surveillance cameras. According to Tina Parker, owner and operator of Parker Ag, "we can see the exterior of the warehouse from our home, but all of the loading doors are on the far side of the building and hidden from view. Initially we were looking for a way to passively keep an eye on those doors when we were not on site."

Seed and farming chemical distributors play a critical role in US agriculture by delivering necessary means of production when and where they are needed. While engaged in a very specific industry, these agribusiness operators have a lot in common with many industrial supply and wholesale operations. Most build inventory to values in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars' during the winter months in order to be ready to deliver to all of their customers at the start of the planting season.

Interstate Telephone Company, an independent telecommunications and broadband service provider serving Emerson, introduced Parker to its Smart Business solution provided through Clear2there and its Viewbiquity Cloud Application Suite (VCAS). "We had deployed Smart Farm services throughout the Emerson area, and we were certain that the complementary Smart Business solution set would give Parker the flexibility to create a customized package to meet all of their business and security needs," said Bryan Nelson, director of network operations for Interstate Telephone.

BEYOND SIMPLE SURVEILLANCE

Working with Parker to assess the needs of the business, it became clear to Interstate that a simple passive surveillance installation would not offer the level of sophistication that the business required. "We quickly came to the conclusion that an access control system tied to the surveillance cameras for event-based recording was going to be the most beneficial solution for this company," noted Nelson.

"We employ both full-time and seasonal workers in the warehouse and in the business office located in the facility," continued Parker. "When we started evaluating which employees need access to specified locations in the building, it became apparent that adding a card-based access control system could address a variety of concerns, including deterring pilferage, maintaining a safe working environment, and managing employee time."

Using the access control system, together with the video surveillance capabilities inside and outside the building, Parker is able to control not just where workers are allowed to go, but also what times of day and days of the week that staff members can gain access to a location. The system also records video and still images of entrances whenever a card is swiped to provide management with the opportunity to verify that only authorized individuals are in the building.

SMART BUSINESS AT PARKER AG

The Smart Business concept leverages broadband services, mobility, and a wide range of surveillance, control, monitoring, and control devices, combined with a flexible and robust management platform to deliver custom solutions that match the needs of any business. For Parker Ag, the Smart Business application employs surveillance cameras throughout the warehouse, integrated access control for outside doors, as well as the administrative section of the building, along with lighting controls, motion and door sensors throughout the facility, and smart thermostats.

THE SMART BUSINESS SOLUTION

Clear2there's VCAS platform gives Interstate Telephone the tools and capabilities to create a customized combination of surveillance, access control, and monitoring that satisfied all of Parker's requirements. The comprehensive service enables users to access data and images from all of the different sensors and devices throughout the enterprise from any Internet-connected device – including smartphones, tablets, and computers.

"We originally thought that the lighting controls would be a good way to manage energy costs, "noted Parker. "However, once we started using the Rules Engine in the VCAS app, we soon discovered that there were a number of creative options as well. For example, when I enter the warehouse after hours, turning on the large overhead

lights just to get to the office is a tremendous waste of energy. With the Smart Business app, we easily created a rule that turns only the lights along the path to the office on and off across the warehouse whenever my keycard is used to open a door. Not only efficient, but pretty cool too!"

Monitoring plays a critical role in maintaining safety and inventory oversight at Parker Ag. Video feeds from surveillance cameras are recorded and stored to enable review when necessary. "Being able to instantly review the video is a very big benefit for us," explained Parker. "We have used these resources for incident review and mitigation planning, as well as order preparation and loading to investigate discrepancies reported by customers. Unfortunately, we also review incidents of pilferage – in an environment where a five-gallon container of liquid concentrate can have a value in the thousands of dollars. This visibility is critical to our business."

The VCAS system sends autonomous text messages and email alerts when building access is detected outside of normal parameters. These alerts can include still images from pertinent cameras, and also trigger recording for future review. In addition, Parker can permit access remotely after viewing the live image from a particular camera on demand – a feature that can save countless trips to the warehouse while ensuring site security.

THE SERVICE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

Interstate Telephone delivered the Smart Business solution to Parker Ag over fiber that it had installed throughout its serving area. The addition of video surveillance did require a small increase in upstream bandwidth usage – something that is typically underused in most broadband deployments. Using the VCAS platform, Interstate Telephone was able to deliver these services without any significant capital investment or impact to network operations.

Smart Business technology has broad applications beyond the agriculture sector and can have an immediate operational impact on nearly any business with simple integration with existing access control, HVAC, lighting control, and other fundamental business automation and process technology. Providers like Interstate Telephone are seeing increased demand from their business customers for efficient, affordable, and extremely valuable smart business solutions.