

Camera and security basics

There is a multitude of camera and recording options and small business owners are left to choose what they feel is the best fit for their applications. Since there are so many different cameras on the market, many business owners have chosen the most inexpensive cameras possible and are disappointed by the results. A properly designed video surveillance system is not going to be cheap. It is designed to protect your business, your hard work and money invested in your business.

As small business owners you are going to come across many myths in regards to the surveillance world, and some of them can be hard to isolate from the truth. Many security providers will emphasize the need for 30 frames per second of video. The truth of the matter is that in a retail environment 15 to 20 frames per second can be more than adequate. Thirty frames per second is the smooth video footage where you can see all of the motions of what is going

on. The challenge to obtaining 30 frames per second comes down to the capabilities of your DVR. Many DVRs share the available frames. For example a DVR may specify that it has 120 shared frames per second when recording. If that DVR has 16 cameras hooked up to it, and all of those cameras are recording, the record frame rate for each camera would be 7.5 frames per second. Even though there is information there, it may not be of great detail and subsequently less useful than if you would have gone to a better quality DVR. It is important to note also that the more frame rate you can capture, the more hard drive space you will require in order to store the information. With technology being where it is today you can get larger hard drives in your DVR without a huge increase in cost.

Cameras can offer their own group of myths as well. Some companies will emphasize the need for IR cameras, since they can see in poor lighting conditions. Although this is true, the lifespan of the camera is decreased due to the life of the IR bulbs being used to illu-

minate the dark areas. Many decent quality cameras have a day/night feature that allows the camera to go to a black/white mode when the lighting drops below a specific lux level. A lux is a measure of light when looking at cameras. 0 lux represents total darkness. Many day/night cameras can work in 0.3 and down to 0.0003 lux in some cases.

New technology is coming out to address the IR lifespan issue and will use gain circuits

to boost images captured in extremely low light and use Digital Signal Processing (DSP) to produce a usable image.

When you are looking at protecting your hard work remember that you have put in many hours of blood, sweat and tears into your business and treat your video surveillance system as an investment rather than a pain. That system will pay for itself and will give you piece of mind.

Submitted by Steve Wade