

FOOD RETAILER

International Roll-Out of Video Management Software



FACTS

Customer:
Food Retailer

Vertical Market:
Retail

Product:
Qognify VMS
Qognify Umbrella
Qognify BVI

TURNING A COST FACTOR INTO A STRATEGIC TOOL

Centralized roll-out, monitoring and management of video surveillance technology for an international food retailer – reducing efforts, costs, and risks.

It is crucial for retailers to create a safe and secure environment for their employees and customers. The use of security technology has for decades been a tried and tested instrument to achieve this – video systems have become indispensable in retail. What remains is the challenge of managing these systems across many branches – and sometimes even across national borders – in an efficient and effective way. Because, an inadequately designed system infrastructure or insufficient technological capabilities can cause enormous costs and efforts, which are directly reflected in the bottom line. So, what can a retailer do to use and manage security technology in a reasonable way?

Let's look at the real-life example of an international food retailer that operates several hundreds of stores across many countries and jurisdictions. The company has been using video systems for loss prevention for many years. So far, these systems have been local “islands” – with a stand-alone recorder in each branch to manage, record and display the streams from around 20 cameras. Every local system is operated by the on-site staff. Some of the stores in rural areas or countries with poor infrastructure only have a narrow-band internet connection, which was one of the reasons for the decentralized system architecture.

The convincing capabilities of the Qognify solution and the resulting cost savings have eventually prompted almost all subsidiaries to decide in favor of it.



ISOLATED SYSTEMS IMPOSING ENORMOUS EFFORTS, COSTS, AND RISKS

The monitoring and management of this environment posed real challenges for the company. Since the local systems did not provide any information about their operating status to the retailer's central IT, failures of servers or cameras were often only recognized when there longer recording gaps had already occurred. There was also no early warning system in case of a critical utilization of resources. Configuration changes, such as those that may result from new legal regulations on video retention periods or from internal policies, typically involved enormous effort. The IT department (or several local security installers) had to make all changes directly on site or connect to each individual branch one after the other via the administration interface - which was very error-prone and time-consuming due to the sometimes low bandwidths. The roll-out of adjustments to the system configuration easily took several staff days and it sometimes took weeks until the deployment was complete. In addition to this, there was also risk involved: Since camera firmware updates were subject to the same process, it could take weeks for new firmware containing critical security fixes to be installed in all branches. The consequences: an overwhelmed IT department, high and increasing costs, long deployment cycles and increased security risks - reason enough for the retailer to look for a smarter and more efficient solution.

That's why the company went in search of a future-proof video management platform that could better meet the requirements and reduce the costs. Another important selection criterion was the availability of open interfaces, for example to communicate with access control systems in the stores or to connect retail-specific video analysis such as counter-flow detection or people counting. Of course, the video solution had to be GDPR-compliant to protect the privacy rights of employees and customers - especially when data is shared with law enforcement authorities. In the course of the tender process, Qognify was asked to develop and present a solution concept. Qognify offered a combination of the video management software Qognify VMS and the management and monitoring platform Qognify Umbrella. The retailer finally decided to give the Qognify concept a go-ahead, leaving the final decision on which video system to use to its national subsidiaries. The convincing capabilities of the Qognify solution and the resulting cost savings have eventually prompted almost all subsidiaries to decide in favor of it.

THE SOLUTION

A POWERFUL WEB-BASED MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING TOOL

The deployment of the new video concept was associated with a comprehensive roll-out per country, since the retailer's central IT department decided to use pre-defined, standardized bundles of cameras, IT hardware and software in the interest of easier production and maintenance. The offline configuration capabilities of Qognify VMS were a major advantage, as the systems can be preconfigured by one global partner in an industrialized process. Subsequently, they are shipped to the stores and installed by various local security integrators in a very short time. Thanks to the intuitive usability of the UI, the staff in the branches do not need lengthy training and can start using the system immediately.

All local installations of Qognify VMS are connected to one central cloud-based instance of Qognify Umbrella. Due to the specific design of Qognify Umbrella and the use of advanced web technologies, the permanent communication between the video systems in the stores and the central management platform including information about the operating status of cameras, servers, and software components is reduced to a bare minimum. This keeps the amount of data extremely low, which enables Qognify Umbrella to even work over narrow-band internet connections. In contrast to the past, the central IT department gets now immediately notified about system failures or high system load and can therefore initiate appropriate measures in time – before a recording failure can cause serious consequences.

In case of a configuration adjustment, the changes are defined in the Qognify Umbrella system and then simultaneously transmitted to all relevant Qognify VMS installations. Since all modifications are applied at data level, the amount of data to be transmitted is extremely small, which additionally speeds up the process. While a system administrator in the past had to connect to sometimes more than a hundred local video systems remotely one after the other to manually adjust the configuration via the management interface, this can now be done in one single step. The time required is thus reduced from several days to just a few minutes.

Qognify Umbrella also helps the retailer to avoid overspending on software licenses as these are also centrally monitored and managed. In addition, reports can be created that show the configuration status of each branch - an enormous relief for the central IT departments.





A SOLUTION THAT EVOLVES

The subsidiaries that had decided early on to switch to the Qognify solution were able to benefit from the enormous added value after a very short time and were enthusiastic about the time and cost savings. As a result, the penetration rate within the retailer's organization continued to increase. The central IT department was also excited, as operation and management of the system became much easier.

As a next step, the retailer is now planning to leverage additional benefits of the deployed Qognify solution. Since organized retail crime (ORC) in particular has increased significantly in recent years, the Loss Prevention Team is looking for new ways to specifically investigate suspicious transaction types such as cancellations, void transactions, or returns. For this reason, currently a proof of concept is taking place with the Qognify BVI solution, which enables video data to be linked to transaction data – thus providing the basis for targeted and more efficient investigations.



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