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Water Valley is Game for IP Video



Water Valley School District may be a little school, but they are big on technology. The small district is home to 350 students in grades K-12 in mid-west Texas. Over the years, the school has installed several consumer-grade video surveillance cameras. However, in 2007, the school's IT department decided to start looking at replacement technology.

Director of Technology, James Ditmore, recognized the benefits of IP (network) video over analog. "The cameras we purchased years ago were just out-of-the-box cameras from a retail store. They are beginning to show their age in terms of performance and don't offer the reliability, durability, or scalability of commercial-grade products. Each brand of camera works a little differently, so they are difficult to service as well. As we considered replacing the system, I knew an investment in network video would eliminate many of the proprietary interconnectivity issues and service challenges we've had over the years," said Ditmore.

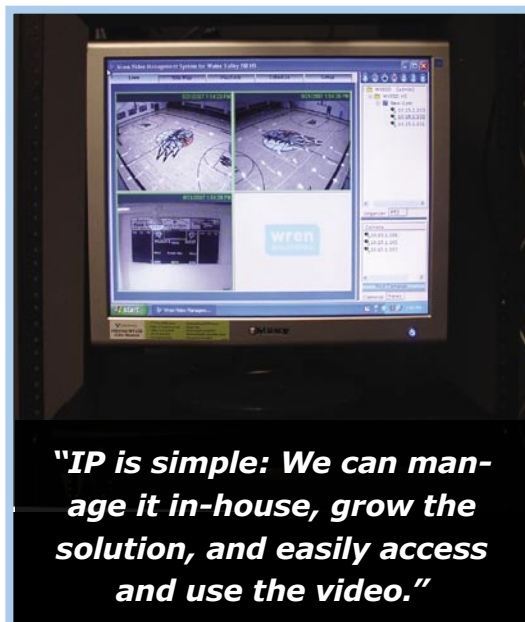
In early 2007, Ditmore attended the Texas Computer Education Association Conference to research his options. He was able to meet with several providers of surveillance solutions, including Wren, a provider of video surveillance solutions for more than 20 years. Ditmore recalls, "To my surprise, most of the vendors were still talking about analog video. But I knew that IP technology was much more flexible, easier to use, and more manageable than analog video. I wanted 'future-proof' technology that would be easy to manage and scale. I quickly realized that Wren was extremely knowledgeable, not only about IP video, but about how it could be used in schools like ours," said Ditmore.

Initially, the school wanted full video coverage of the gymnasium and even planned to provide a live feed to LCD monitors to allow parents working the concession stand to see their kids playing in the games. A small implementation would allow Water Valley to cost-effectively try equipment and experience the benefits of network video, without undertaking a comprehensive replacement effort within a tight timeframe.

Water Valley purchased a network video solution from Wren. Video is managed via Wren's Video Management System (VMS) Software, which enables easy capture, review and retrieval of video. Wren VMS Software makes it easy for Ditmore to share video with school administrators and even enables remote viewing from a web browser. Video is captured by Wren's integrated IP cameras in pendant-mount housings, ideal for the open-ceiling environment in the gym.

It isn't uncommon for the principal or superintendent to drive to the school in the middle of the night in response to a call from police reporting an open door on the campus. Once legacy equipment is replaced with network cameras, Wren VMS Software will give them the ability to view the video over the Internet and verify if there has been a security breach before dispatching police for an on-site investigation. But that is only the beginning of the potential for network video in Water Valley Schools. Ditmore noted, "We plan to deploy even more advanced capabilities such as event notifications so if there is motion near the door after school hours, we are alerted and can get online to see if there is a security breach. On the proactive side, the video will help to prevent problems by ensuring the building is locked down before everyone leaves."

The use of IP video in the gymnasium is just the beginning. Ditmore sees the value of replacing outdated cameras with IP cameras to support security and operations across the district. As funding becomes available, the school will begin deployment of network video in the elementary school to allow the office secretary to remotely monitor entrances and exits to ensure visitors are properly signing in and to watch for suspicious activities at the main entrance. Phase two will be IP video installation in the high school.



And Ditmore is prepared to grow with the system. "I'm a one-man show. Resources are tight and I will ultimately install and manage the video system. That is another great thing about Wren: They

offered training to get me up to speed on video technology and to help me conduct network planning to ensure that video does not place undue stress on the existing network. As a result of the training, I have decided to construct a virtual LAN in preparation for the expansion of the network video system," said Ditmore.

Ditmore looks forward to deploying a complete IP video surveillance system across campus. "IP is simple: We can manage it in-house, grow the solution, and easily access and use the video," said Ditmore. "As we continue to replace old video equipment across the elementary and high schools, IP video will play an important role in our security on campus."

Ditmore hopes to score a complete IP video system in the next twelve months.