



Atlantis Casino Resort Spa deploys IP video to increase security and surveillance staff effectiveness

The 1000-room Atlantis Casino Resort Spa in Reno, Nev., recently completed an impressive \$75 million expansion. The renovations and additions included a new poker room, race and sports book, sports bar, Manhattan Deli, new ballroom, and meeting rooms. A new skybridge now connects the complex to the Reno/Sparks Convention Center and the resort offers an all-new spa experience.

The expanded Atlantis boasts a 61,000-square-foot casino, open 24 hours a day, with 1,452 slot machines and 42 table games. The newly outfitted casino and resort needed an upgraded, comprehensive surveillance system to match its status as one of Reno's top gambling and entertainment destinations.

Converting Existing Security onto One IP Surveillance Platform

The casino's previous video system was an unwieldy combination of VCRs and DVRs that burdened staff with a large equipment footprint. "With our former mix of technologies, it was time-consuming to do video reviews. We had to have greater efficiency and system expandability," says Michael "Mack" Brutsche, the casino's Director of Surveillance. "We also wanted both the Surveillance (gaming areas) and Security (non-gaming areas) video monitoring systems combined onto a single platform, but securely partitioned apart from each other."

Prior to taking on his role of Director of Surveillance, Brutsche spent two years in surveillance operations at the Atlantis and seven years in surveillance operations in the Mid-South of the country. He and his staff are in charge of analyzing and acting upon all video output. "This is a 24/7 operation, so every hour of every day 'live eyes' are our priority," Brutsche says. "Table games, point-of-sale transactions, cash and chip counting — we need to be watching all of them, all the time."

Maximizing "Live Eyes" on the Job

Atlantis Casino Resort Spa has standardized on the DVTel intelligent Security Operations Center (iSOC) to provide video surveillance management throughout the entire entertainment and hotel complex. Alliance System Group, a highly experienced integrator in the casino market, performed the system upgrade and all the installation work.

At present, the iSOC manages data from more than 700 analog cameras — and that number is constantly growing. The casino's analog cameras are connected to their network using DVTel encoders. The cameras are a mix of Pelco, Vicon, Panasonic and Sanyo models. Most of the cameras are fixed, but PTZ models are deployed in certain strategic locations. Areas under surveillance include gaming tables, money counting cages, public areas, parking lots, hotel areas and administrative offices.

Atlantis does both live monitoring of key areas in the casino and recording of all cameras. Video is recorded at the required 4 CIF and 30 frames-per-second (fps) and other secondary areas are captured at 2 CIF and 15 fps.

Previously, all camera data was viewed from only one location. With the upgraded system, Brutsche now maintains multiple monitoring workstations, and he can add workstations anywhere else he needs them for security personnel or senior staff to review casino action.

“The user interface is great, and we can quickly research more incidents than ever before,” Brutsche says. “Our ability to more efficiently complete incident reviews means more of our staff time is devoted to live monitoring and catching people doing what they shouldn’t be doing. With this new system, now everything is right there at our fingertips, and we can delegate camera and monitoring management exactly where we want it.”

The World of Casino Surveillance

With all those cameras at work — more than six million video hours every year — what are Brutsche and team looking for? He says that for both live and recorded video, they monitor for guest and team member accidents, slip-and-falls, trips on stairs, and all incidents involving guests. Recently, a staff member doing live monitoring saw someone take a guest’s jacket, and the staff member contacted security on the floor and the jacket was quickly returned.

“We’re catching a substantial number of incidents on live monitoring, but we always want to see more,” Brutsche says. “A lot of our time is spent on evaluation of our players, looking for the ‘advantage players,’ the shot-takers, and for any illegal devices being employed at the gaming tables.

“We’re always trying to stay one step ahead,” he continues. “When we converted to a ticket-in/ticket-out system, we eliminated 90 percent of the cheating on the slots. That’s great, but now we have to be on guard for actions to compromise the ticketing system. To stay on top of this, video surveillance is crucial.”

Theft is Theft

“Due to the nature of our work, I can’t go into details on most events,” Brutsche explains, “but finding the best equipment to catch these things is only half the equation. With the field of security/surveillance exponentially expanding across the nation, we are fortunate to have assembled a dedicated operations team and an experienced technical team. I look for team members that take their job seriously, are dedicated to the end-result, and follow my philosophy of ‘Stealing from the company I work for, is stealing from me.’ Doesn’t matter if it is \$1 or \$1,000 — theft is theft.”

The Beauty of IP

As with all casinos, space is money, so square footage can be at a premium. Initially the team had sufficient space when they had only a few hundred cameras, but as the resort grew they had nowhere to expand.

“With an IP digital system, because it takes up a smaller footprint, we could double and then triple our number of cameras and the monitoring equipment to manage them,” Brutsche says. “Our former system was limited to 512 inputs — if I wanted to expand I needed double the space. Now, we can scale within the existing footprint. We only need to add more servers and storage (provided by Dell), and we have that rack space.”

In addition to scalability and flexibility, the Atlantis IP video management system provides multiple operational benefits. In a recent incident, Brutsche was on the phone with his counterpart in security: “We were talking about a particular incident that happened on the floor a few days ago, and rather than giving him a drawn-out explanation of what happened, I dragged and dropped the video sequence from my computer onto his monitor, and even though he is two floors away and on the opposite side of the building, we could both watch the video and discuss the outcome simultaneously.”

The Future for Atlantis Casino

The Atlantis casino and resort complex continues to expand, and that means it continues to add cameras in order to monitor gaming operations, but also to provide a safe environment for all. “Most people think video monitoring is there just so the establishment can catch the bad guy,” Brutsche says. “We also want to make sure we are monitoring all areas of the casino, hotel, parking lots and back of the house to assist with the safety and comfort of our guests and our team members.

“It’s amazing really,” Brutsche reflects. “The Atlantis started out as a coffee shop and a motor lodge — now we are one of the biggest and best operations in town. We have nine restaurants, three hotel towers and gaming around the clock. Our property is continually expanding, and we are always adding cameras and improving coverage, every week.”

As Brutsche and the Atlantis team look to constantly improve their video surveillance and video management to stay one step ahead of the bad guys, they are evaluating the integration of additional systems. “By migrating to a digital platform, we now have the ability to expand our POS interface,” Brutsche says. “We want to be able to quickly search specific transactions. Let’s say we’re getting a lot of ‘No Sale’ (cash drawer open) events at a particular terminal, I want to clearly see what is happening each time that drawer is open.”

With constant expansion, Brutsche is looking to reduce the variety of cameras he employs. Atlantis purchases “the best image quality for the best price,” when making new camera decisions. “One of the great things about DVTel is they have their own camera line with lots of options,” Brutsche says.

“With this powerful new video platform, we have the ability to expand and to integrate new capabilities,” he concludes. “We are now getting incident reviews done efficiently and effectively, so we can focus on live monitoring. That’s the key for us: catch it while it’s happening and fix the problem now, not after we review the video hours later.”