Case Study

Brisbane City Hall

Tackles major system upgrade with Genetec Omnicast video surveillance

Largest local government organization in Australia depends on powerful VMS with multiple security systems integrations to improve security operations.

Business challenge

Brisbane City Hall, presiding over bustling King George Square, is one of Australia's most stately public buildings. While it opened in 1930 and is now listed by the Register of the National Estate, Brisbane City Hall was built on wet ground which over decades led to subsidence, concrete cancer and problems with corrosion in aging wiring.

So the site closed at the end of December 2009 for a ground-up restoration where the City Hall was completely gutted and rebuilt as closely as possible to Hall & Prentice's original specifications. As part of this process, a $3 million integrated electronic security system was installed, which is monitored from an in-house control room.

"First of all, Brisbane City Hall had to be open to the people, it had to be a place for the people," said Paul Rishman, Corporate Security Manager of Brisbane City Council. "This meant that we needed to be able to keep the site open or lock it down to the last door. And finally, we needed to be able to track people throughout the building. That really was the essence of this solution, operationally. From these basic needs we moved on to the systems we should use and how should we integrate them to achieve our goals."

According to Rishman, another key operational element of the site is that it's large, complex and busy, yet it only has two security officers 24/7. Running at this level of efficiency, it's vital that these officers be empowered by technology to work as effectively as possible. "This system is very much designed so that the entire building can be managed by this very small team and that meant we needed an intelligent solution with proactive detection and reporting capabilities."

With these requirements in mind, Brisbane City Council worked alongside Genetec-certified integrator, Blake Systems, to find the right solution for the job: Omnicast video surveillance with key integrations to other systems like access control, asset management and video analytics and more.

Maximising Efficiency with Leading-Edge Surveillance

At the heart of the new CCTV solution is the Genetec video management system, Omnicast, which manages 120 channels of AgentVi video analytics in real time. Omnicast also manages a selection of around 200 Axis Communications 720p HD IP cameras. The cameras include fixed domes, mini domes, nine of those teeny people counting cameras and many flexible 5534 720p PTZ domes.

Another system handles access control alarms while Rishman says a key proactive capability of the solution involved the installation of Ekahau, an RFID-over-Wi-Fi real time location system that is used in conjunction with tags that can be carried by staff or attached to assets. This provides them the ability to track the movements of key personnel (and assets) across the site.

"Genetec has a Map Manager interface and the next-gen will be 3D so we'll be able to put the Ekahau into it and literally the camera will alert us to an intrusion, show an image and show a 3D representation of the room. We can also do a lot with the access control system," explains Anthony Brown from Blake Systems, the integrator overseeing the project. "Sometimes we use the third-party access control system as the pull and feed it to Genetec; and sometimes we use the Genetec as the pull and feed it to access control system. It just depends whether it's a CCTV-heavy or an access control and alarm-heavy application."

In terms of efficiency, their security operators are reaping the benefits of their new video management system: "We have a monitor pre-loaded with preset tabs so during specific events, our operators can hit the tab and the Genetec system will populate the screen with pre-selected camera views," Rishman says. "And we have another monitor that allows our security operators to select the views they consider most important, depending on events of the day. At the moment, it's set to the entry but it might be any group of camera views our security team decides will help. It's drag and drop – very easy to use."

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It's Future Proof: Extending Capabilities across Council Buildings

An interesting aspect of this site is the nature of Brisbane City Council as one of the largest local government organisations on the planet. Because Council is homogeneous, it gives the team a lot of scope for integration of other Council buildings and surveillance systems in the future, as well as allowing redundancy of operations between multiple sites.

Thanks to Genetec's flexibility and a unique feature called Federation which bridges independent systems under one, future plans are being considered. According to Rishman "This control room has the ability to be used as a backup for our operations centre which is 5-6km down the road should this be required. We have a number of control rooms monitoring around 900 cameras at buildings across the city and the plan is to integrate them."

From a visitor's perspective it's impossible not to be impressed with the renovations and the new security solution but does it give Brisbane City Council everything it wanted at City Hall?

"Absolutely," says Rishman. "This system does exactly what we hoped it would do and it's future proof, so we can build on it and integrate multiple sub systems. From here, the challenge is going to be taking this model and expanding it into the rest of our portfolio of sites, while integrating all these sites into our full ITC infrastructure. All in all, everyone is very happy with the outcome. I've done a few big projects in my time. This is one of the bigger ones and from the point of view of system capability, it's definitely the best."

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