

Flash Foods finds a new view with FKI

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Until recently, spending hours scanning through poor-quality videotapes was the only way Flash Foods could investigate "questionable" transactions in its stores. The company wanted to maintain a "presence" at the point-of-sale to deter internal theft, but it needed something that met the needs of its time-pressed managers.

"The system we had in place was archaic, and it was expensive to replace the VHS systems and tapes," says Jenny Bullard, chief information officer for Flash Foods (Waycross, GA). "We're a technologically advanced company, and we had been wanting to go digital for some time. We wanted something more advanced and easier for store employees to utilize."

In search of a solution, Chris Tiller, director of operations for Flash Foods, met with Capital Business Equipment (CBE) which recommended that Flash Foods deploy a digital video recorder that would be linked to its POS system. After evaluation, Flash Foods decided the Image Vault DVR from FKI Security Group would best suit its needs.

Flash Foods began evaluating different digital systems in mid-2003. The company was so impressed with a demo of Image Vault that it set up three test sites in January 2004. The test sites worked so well that Flash Foods installed Image Vault DVRs in 13 more stores, for a total of 16 as of May 2004. The chain is in the midst of a gradual rollout that will eventually include all of its 182 stores, with new builds taking top priority.

"The positive results experienced by Flash Foods are an outcome of working with many of the country's leading convenience store chains over the past six years," says Van Carlisle, president and CEO of FKI Security Group. "Image Vault's management team works closely with

many of the c-store industry's leaders in technology, operations and security. We continually seek ways to enhance Image Vault's software to meet the ever-changing needs of c-store operators."

The Image Vault solution takes data from the POS and puts it into a cross-indexed database, which allows monitoring of specific transactions. Flash Foods' store managers can run searches to review video associated with the exact

forces the necessity to research these shortages."

In addition, Flash Foods has the ability to maintain connectivity between stores and the corporate office. Once a suspicious transaction is identified, immediate action can be taken on direct orders from the executives at headquarters.

"We can burn CDs and share them within different stores and offices," says Tiller. "All the necessary supervisors and managers can consult the CD at the same time in different places during a conference call, and we can all discuss what needs to be done. It gives us better control over our stores and eliminates a lot of questions."

Implementation in the first test store took less than four months. Some stores utilized old cameras, while new cameras were added where needed. Overall, the chain has as many as four different configurations of security equipment. Tiller says there isn't much of a cost difference between Flash Foods' old VHS system and the new digital system, but for the invest-

ment it's experiencing a quicker return with time savings alone. But one of the greatest benefits Flash Foods is experiencing is the difference it's making in the lives of its employees.

"Employee morale is greatly improved," says Tiller. "Now we don't have boxes of VHS tapes taking up most of our back rooms; this entire system is basically a screen and a mouse. Our managers can do their jobs more efficiently rather than scanning tape after tape; they can get back to the things that really matter—like taking care of our customers and having more time for their families."

—Kate Buczeko, Associate Editor



Image Vault's Windows-based format was easy for Flash Foods' managers and supervisors to utilize, while helping them investigate shortages more efficiently.

date and time a register void or "no sale" is logged. The transaction can then be reviewed; any evidence of theft may be turned over to the appropriate authorities.

"The system offers a Windows-based program that our managers can easily pick up," says Bullard. "Image Vault offered the opportunity to research [questionable transactions] effortlessly. Managers or supervisors can pull up actual events, and it presents red flags for internal theft."

"One of our stores had inventory issues and the manager had a hard time investigating them with our previous system," adds Tiller. "Once we got Image Vault in place, the manager could look under 'no sales' and 'voids' at specific times, like during grocery deliveries. It's a real time-saver for management, and making the process more accessible rein-

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