Virtual Police Providing Unique Solution

Mega wireless communications company seeks security solution

- By Ralph C. Jensen
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If a customer can dream of a security solution, integrator Lance Rankin can do it. Rankin and his Virtual Police team has become a preferred vender to one of the world's largest wireless communications and telecommunications providers.

"We are 100-percent customer focused," Rankin said. "We would not hesitate to take on a job because we believe in the products that we represent. We're a 'no contracts, no handcuffs'- type of business. We have that much confidence in the work we do."

Rankin's most recent job at a Texas network equipment center meant a switch out of access control and camera systems. He said that the customer was having significant security problems, so they turned to Virtual Police for a solution that would accommodate their internal corporate policy, the data center's facility size and corporate IT design.

The data center sits on 25 acres, employs more than 2,000 people and includes more than 200 doors throughout the facility. Rankin introduced KABA access systems and Mobotix network cameras to secure the facility.

"We're the largest installer of KABA systems," said Rankin. "We work with their engineers to ensure we're doing all the right things and even some things we can think of to support our customers.

"About six years ago, we installed several hundred door units at a site. Since then, we have had to replace only four door units. It wasn't because the units were defective; two of them failed because of a wiring problem with a power supply, and the other two failed because a lightning strike at the facility took out a whole wing of electronic-type devices."

As soon as Rankin and his team of installers were pulled into this data center project, they assessed the customer's situation, goals, policies and needs. Once they understood the scope of the project, they found the right equipment then added their own value to it. The net result was an A+ grade from the end user.

The install included more than 250 MOBOTIX cameras, HID readers on doors, iCLASS cards, and 14 KABA AM524 controllers with 100 door units, clustered together with one cluster master. The access control system is Linux-based so it allows for customization.

"Our IT programmer is a Linux enthusiast," Rankin said. "With an open source format operating system, you can tie into central programming and reporting functions. We wanted to read data and push data, and with this type of control, you can work the system to get what you need. It allows us, as the installer, to be creative and the customer to be satisfied—they got exactly what they want."

The wireless company had a unique need because the solution provider needed to access the corporation's Active Directory. Virtual Police tied into the Active Directory to view approvals and permissions of employees before assigning access at the local level. Rankin said that it is important to do this to keep the wireless company in sync from the corporate level to the local level.

Virtual Police is one of few integrators in the country that has developed a program that ties into a client's Active Directory. They also have developed an interface to the KABA embedded access control application that allows them to provide client specific data, such as finding out who did not enter an access point within the last 90 days.

The hub of the KABA system is the Access Manager 524, which includes an embedded access control application. With this system, there is no PC or servers to install. End users execute system administration, user setup and event viewing via a standard web browser. To access the application, users type the IP address, log into the system and the application menu displays.

Virtual Police also created a custom home page on the data center's internal network and installed it on top-level manager's computers. The managers can pull up the Virtual Police Launch Pad and click on areas or reports that are of interest to them. For example, they can select a door and see the activity at the door, or pick an employee and see every move that person made. The managers also can see the camera views from their computer screens. All activity is kept within the KABA database.

"It knows every card swiped, the different access groups and who belongs to them," Rankin said. "This system serves as the vehicle for setting up custom days, and holiday and access schedules."

A woman-owned business, you might not have heard of Virtual Police before. Rankin likes it like this, or, he said that they enjoy the notion that they are a truly different kind of integrator. Even though they have a select few customers, Rankin said that they go very deep with those companies they do work with.

"We're a small company, but we're very nimble," Rankin said. "Competence and customer satisfaction is our winning combination."

So, Rankin's work continues. He is happy to be a small integrator and equally as happy to focus on the needs of those he serves. His future plans include expanding into Europe with the KABA product and the data center expansion.

About the Author

Ralph C. Jensen is editor-in-chief of Security Products magazine.