



2006 Technology Innovation Award:

MDI Security's Viewpoint Advanced Security Link

By Charles Hudson

With its VIEWpoint Advanced Security Link, MDI Security has taken the next step in helping organizations of any size get the tools to protect their assets from the unique security threats that confront every business. With this product, MDI brings security convergence to the middle market in an affordable and expandable modular platform.

Configured through cost-effective modular software components, the ASL fulfills all business security requirements -- from basic to complex. The ASL can function as a robust video monitoring and DVR solution, or it can scale to a multi-facility, security operations control center without incurring hardware replacement costs.

This new MDI offering is flexible and scalable. MDI Security's engineers have focused their efforts on software that works within open systems architecture. The company continues to develop network-centric or network products that will work within any existing security infrastructure. The VIEWpoint ASL is MDI's way of bringing it all together for any security integrator. By adding capabilities or expanding the locations for this product, the MDI ASL appliance requires only the purchase of a new module.

The modular, open systems architecture allows MDI's dealers to custom configure it to address requirements for multiple markets and a broad variety of applications. MDI dealers can also move to vertical markets, such as automated teller machines (ATMs) or retail point-of-sale cash registers. The VIEWpoint ASL addresses other operational concerns, such as access control or time and attendance, all from the same network box. The ASL primarily functions as a digital video/network video recorder. Yet, the new MDI product can also allow security managers to configure it as a centralized security management solution capable of managing, synchronizing and controlling the full breadth of a single facility's security needs from a single IP security appliance.

The VIEWpoint ASL may also be networked as a remote security management station, allowing security professionals to use it as a multi-site, enterprise-wide security management solution. The product can easily upgrade to multi-site enterprise solutions with seamless migration of database and site configuration data. Some of the ASL's basic and modular capabilities include:

1. CCTV
2. Combination NVR/DVR
3. ATM surveillance
4. POS surveillance
5. Time and attendance
6. Access control
7. Badging
8. Alarm management and verification
9. Central physical security management
10. Networked remote security management

The VIEWpoint ASL has a rich feature set:

1. The capability to monitor, record and control up to 32 attached analog and/or IP cameras
2. By adding four individual ASL units, we could reach remote clients with up to 128 simultaneous low bandwidth network connections.
3. The ability to simultaneously display up to 512 cameras located at various geographical location via the Internet with 16 individual ASLs working together.
4. An intuitive graphical interface that allows visual mapping of any significant security event.
5. Network video archiving was easily achieved through routing video.
6. Impressive intrusion detection features.
7. Audio recording that would meet the most stringent, forensic needs of any legal investigation.
8. Duplex audio via network.



Suggested Price Point

The top-line ASL configuration corresponded with the feature/functionality found with other top line DVR/NVRs, but was priced considerably less. One of the significant cost saving we found during our evaluation was the modular flexibility that comes with the VIEWpoint ASL. This feature allows security professionals to address a wide variety of industry-specific needs by only adding the software or hardware modules needed to accomplish the upgraded functionality.

Configured as a single unit security management solution, the ASL eliminates costs associated with separate hardware purchases required for securing a business. Its networked access control (with single board controller and single wire to the door) further reduces the implementation cost while still providing increased flexibility.

The ASL's open system architecture and application program interface (API) allow security providers to add completely new functionality to tailor the system to the client's unique needs. Scalability allows it to grow with the client, providing upward migration without incurring hardware and software replacement. As well, we found that the VIEWpoint ASL has no significant database conversion costs.

As we began to review the full capability of the ASL, we found it provided a single technology for multiple applications allowing nearly unlimited solutions. The dealer and client both benefit from reduced training and support costs with a single core technology making multiple solutions possible for them.

With its remote configuration capability, MDI's tech support team can work with their customers to set up their ASL security suite. We believe this capability will save a considerable amount of time during the product's initial installation phase.

Modules

MDI provided our committee four modules to evaluate – BankWatch, Point of Sale, RemoteWatch, and Time/Attendance. Each module was easy to load on the ASL.

1. BankWatch

Through its BankWatch module, bank security managers can record video and transactions from an ATM or bank teller terminal. What makes BankWatch different from other products in its price category is the capability to conduct a general video search of any transaction. With BankWatch, security professionals can find any ATM transaction video remotely from anywhere, using any Internet browser. Another impressive feature was the capability to view the same

video from multiple locations at the same time. BankWatch should help banks lower false liability claims from customers who claim someone else used a stolen ATM or credit card to withdraw money from their bank accounts.

2. ASL Point-of-Sale Module

With the ASL Point-of-Sale module, a tool that helps retailers eliminate the shrinkage from shoplifting and employee theft, users can view live video of a transaction without interrupting a recording of a transaction. This module works with the 14 major cash register companies that sell their product to most of the retail industry. Mitchell Phan, the module's chief development engineer, showed a demo of a convenience store worker selling a newspaper, coffee and a pack of cigarettes to a customer. During this demo, the cashier rang up the coffee and the newspaper, but allowed the customer to take the cigarettes without paying for them. Phan pointed out that research on this kind of shrinkage shows a higher likelihood that convenience store employees will steal than their major retailer counterparts. Once employees know that a video system is capturing each sale, most employees will stop giving their friends unauthorized items, he said.

3. CasinoWatch

After watching Phan demonstrate it, we liked its storage capability and multiple viewing functions. Each module offers a high frame per second rate, allowing security professionals to catch gamblers who are stealing chips or counting cards. Another feature in CasinoWatch was the capability to allow multiple managers or security professionals to look at the same tape from different offices. Like other ASL modules, this product has an easy searching capability. It eliminates the hundreds of tapes most casinos keep on file to protect themselves in the event of a possibly security breach or lawsuit.

4. Time and Attendance Module

Security products like this one will help managers, human resources professionals and payroll staffs monitor the arrival of each worker. During our demo, Phan showed how the module captured one worker trying to use two badges to log himself and a co-worker at work.

Phan stated that other ASL modules are in development channels with MDI, including ones for law enforcement and insurance professionals. After talking to him about these new markets, we believe the ASL will help security integrators to help address some new issues for its growing client base.

For the final part of our evaluation, we tested the new ASL with iTRUST, MDI's access control system, and the company's DDC II controller. In our evaluation, the ASL worked flawlessly with iTRUST. What impressed us was how easy it was to install an ASL, iTRUST, a module such as BankWatch and a DDC II controller together. The Ethernet dual door controller provided direct connections for two door contacts, two REX, two door lock relays, two door alarms, two tamper switches and four auxiliary inputs.

Final Thoughts

During our review process with the MDI product, we learned that their chief executive officer took a strong role in designing this controller. As we learned that he had spent a lot of time installing cameras in federal prisons and other high risk facilities, we now know why the DDCII controller works so flawlessly with the ASL configuration.

The VIEWpoint ASL provides a single technology solution with unlimited applications. The ASL proved that it was both cost efficient and flexible, with the ability to address any client's specific security needs without incurring the cost of unneeded, unrelated supporting subsystems.

Extremely flexible, the ASL proved that it can expand to fill or support the most demanding security requirements without replacing hardware or software. Our Asset Protection Executive review team liked the network centric capacity of the ASL, which should allow users to realize significant additional cost savings over legacy physical security installations and other so-called network access solutions.