

Candid Camera

New Jersey dealership uses intelligent video and audio monitoring technology to take a bite out of crime

By Kerry Pipes

There's millions of dollars worth of vehicle inventory parked in a five-level garage at Montclair Auto Group, and Nelson Fong feels secure because of his Virtual Sentry security system.

The 46-year-old Fong is the fixed operations director at the Montclair, N.J., dealership that sells and services Lincoln-Mercury, Volvo, Jaguar, BMW and Acura.

It may sound like high-tech government surveillance, but it's readily available to dealerships.

"We have high-dollar inventory and there's a lot of risk involved," explains Fong. "I wanted to eliminate the risks before something happened."

Fong says at any given time, the dealership's five-level parking garage can have up to 600 vehicles parked in it.

"With that volume of vehicles, we needed to know who was coming and who was going," he says.

Every employee who is granted access to the storage area is issued a special access card that records when the employee enters and leaves. The time, date and a photograph are recorded in the system each time an authorized person passes through. And access can only be granted during specific days and hours as determined by Fong.

"Cameras have been mounted on every floor and in the stairwells," says Fong.

Too often, the traditional video recording technology only helps businesses after the fact—when the car has been vandalized or stolen. One may have a brief video clip of the perpetrator.

"One of the unique features of the Virtual Sentry system is its ability to detect any intrusion the moment it happens and transfer via the internet live video and audio to the central station," explains Fong.

If an unauthorized person made his way into the garage, the security person who is monitoring the cameras and screens can actually address the would-be vandal live through a speaker inside the garage. Meanwhile, the police are already on their way to the dealership.



Averting disaster

That's why this past year he purchased a security system from Visentry, a Paramus, N.J., company that sells the Virtual Sentry system. Cameras and intelligent video analysis software are used to detect and deter criminal activity. It's all monitored 24-7 from a central command post. It can also be accessed by authorized users from any computer location.



A pic in time

Cameras watch people and cars coming and going in the lot.

Is all this necessary?

Fong thinks so. At the previous dealership where he worked, one night more than three dozen vehicles were burglarized and vandalized costing the dealer more than \$100,000.

"A system like this one prevents that risk and keeps it from ever happening in the first place," says Fong.

Since installing the system last year at Montclair Auto Group, he proudly says there has not been one incident of vandalism or theft. The system has detected and prevented three incidents without any damage to the dealership. In addition to that peace of mind, the security system reduces the dealership's insurance costs and eliminates the cost of onsite guards.

And it's not just external security threats that are controlled. Fong now knows which of his staff go where and when. As a matter of fact, he's even used the system to track and terminate an employee. And this knowledge is important in a dealership with more than 90 employees, half of which are in the parts and service departments.

Fong's department runs a busy schedule writing more than 2,000 RO's each month. He's been in this business for 19

years now and he understands the importance of fixed operations.

"We're the business that creates new business," he explains. "The sales department sells the first car, but the service department sells the second and third vehicles."

He believes that fixed operations are the backbone of the dealership and making this area secure is of the utmost importance to Fong.

"We try to be proactive with our service customers and their service needs and we need to be proactive with our security needs. I wanted to stop the problem before it ever happened."

That's a fundamental and secure strategy. ■







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