



"Employees feel more secure, and everyone is pleased with the other advantages they get like simpler operations and better identification of any problems with the tellers."

Palle Sørensen, Chief of Security at
AL Bank (Arbejdernes Landsbank)

Milestone Systems provide security and safety for Arbejdernes Landsbank.

A man drives up in a white car, brakes hard in front of the bank entrance, pulls a mask over his head, then runs inside and up to the nearest teller. The bank assistant is brutally knocked aside as the robber quickly fills up a bag with cash from the register. After just one minute and eight seconds, he is out the door again and driving away.

This alarming incident was viewed by the Chief of Security at A.L. Bank, Palle Sørensen, in live video recordings on his PC screen at the headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark, just before he drove out to the subsidiary in the suburb of Hvidovre where this robbery took place on September 27th 2001.

Palle Sørensen is the top person responsible for A.L. Bank's advanced surveillance solution, which has improved the security procedures in their large branch network since 2001. Arbejdernes Landsbank has chosen a digital surveillance solution from Milestone Systems that makes central administration possible for the 70 network video cameras that have been installed in most of the bank's 60 locations.

"It is a really big help to be prepared before meeting with employees after such a shocking incident as a robbery. In advance, I can get an overview of the situation regarding the exact chain of events and which employees have the most need for help," explains Sørensen.



From analog to digital

Up to 13 years ago, Arbejdernes Landsbank used still-picture cameras just like all the other banks. These would record in picture sequence as they were activated. This solution had the major disadvantage that you could only get images of an incident starting from the moment someone pushed an emergency button. You didn't have images covering the entire progress of a robbery, and such security issues as attempts to exchange fake currency and checks were never recorded, either.

AL Bank therefore decided in 1990 to change from the still camera approach to an analog video surveillance solution. That solution operated alright for some years, but in 2001 it was agreed to exchange it with a digital solution from Milestone Systems.

"We were not satisfied with the analog video solution," clarifies Sørensen. "The picture quality was too poor, the video tapes got worn down quickly, and they were difficult to handle."

Simple handling with Milestone

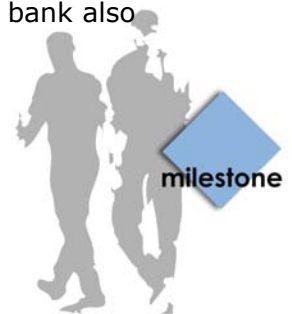
He refers to an incident that took place in a branch on the West coast of Denmark, where there had been an error in expedition during the day. The entire day's recordings were on videotape but it took Palle most of another workday to get an overview of what had happened. He had to look through all of the tapes from that day to find the exact transaction – with all that included in winding the tapes forward and backward on the video machine. Another problem was the fact that the video recordings were a compilation of images from all of that branches' cameras, so it was difficult to see just those from the exact camera where the error was made.

"The analog solution was very time consuming, but that problem is totally resolved with Xprotect from Milestone. Today we have a system that is easy to operate and has the big advantage that we can choose exactly which camera at which location we want to see images from – simply and quickly," explains Sørensen.



Bank on the forefront

With 60 branches, 1,000 employees, and capital assets of 1.4 billion Danish crowns, Arbejdernes Landsbank is the seventh largest financial institution in Denmark. The bank specializes in payroll matters and offers its 200,000 customers service and advice on pensions, real estate, investments and other financial matters. Since the 1960's, A.L. Bank has been one of the industry's technological frontrunners – a position the bank also holds in the area of security.



Their Milestone system has initially been installed in 19 branches at different locations throughout the country. In the long run, it will be rolled out to all 60 locations in parallel with their plans for other office renovations in each branch.

Fast installations

"It's gone much faster than we had expected. Partly because the solution is very simple to implement, and also because there are so many advantages connected with the digital approach that there's nothing to worry about," says Steen Lethan, who is the IT Manager at A.L. Bank responsible for the installation and operation of the Milestone solution.

According to Steen, it only takes one day to implement Milestone Xprotect Business at a branch location.

Central administration

Steen Lethan and Palle Sørensen agreed quickly to go with Milestone Systems, when the bank decided to get a new surveillance solution. The system had to be digital, and Milestone was the leading developer whose solution best fulfilled their requirements.

"The future is digital, and we were not in doubt that we should use that kind of solution. We chose Milestone Systems because they offered a future-safe solution at a reasonable price. Quite simply, we also believed in their vision," declares Palle Sørensen.

One of the functionalities they especially were hooked on was the abilities for central administration of the solution. This is a huge advantage for A.L. Bank because the branches then do not have to spend time and resources on surveillance equipment and recordings. All of the cameras and recordings are managed from the IT department in the suburb of Glostrup and the headquarters in Copenhagen, where the internal operations control center monitors all the cameras and servers in the branches, and ensures they are running optimally.

"There are many benefits with a security solution that is run centrally. We save both on time and money," reports Sørensen. "Previously each branch was separately responsible for the daily operation of cameras and administration of recordings at their locations. But their job is to run the financial business of the bank, which is why it's best to leave matters of security to central management."

Helping the police

Another benefit of the Milestone solution is that A.L. Bank now can give police much better material for investigation work. First of all, the image quality is much higher, and secondly, it is possible to edit together the recordings on a robbery from several cameras, even making an AVI file for the police. That wasn't possible with the old analog system.

"All banks have camera surveillance of some kind, so there's no more preventive effect than before, but our solution includes some features that make a critical difference for our personnel's safety and our ability to help the police. Some of the arrests they've made were definitely due to our digital recordings," says Sørensen.



Procedure



The cameras at the A.L. Bank branches operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but during closing hours they only record if motion is detected. The recordings are stored directly on the local branch hard disc and are replaced (recorded over) when room for new recordings is needed later on. On average, this happens about every 25 days.

Only Palle Sørensen and Steen Lethan have access to view recordings, which they can see on their own computers via the Web. Recordings can also be called up locally, which requires a password given by either Palle or Steen.

"We have chosen this business model to remove insecurity among the employees about the recordings. There should be no question that our surveillance solution is a controlled function that is much easier to manage centrally instead of with local solutions," asserts Sørensen.

All upgrades of the solution are done via the internet. Steen Lethan has remote control of all the cameras and servers from his office in Glostrup without involving any of the local employees to download the newest facilities for the system.

"It's genius! And so easy," Lethan exclaims with a big grin.

Close cooperation

Arbejdernes Landsbank has collaborated closely with Milestone Systems on its implementation. This bank was the first Xprotect customer in the financial sector, and therefore gave both companies the opportunity to help each other in the development process.

"We have absolutely no regrets about our decision. We got to help define the applications for our industry that are particularly important, and Milestone has assisted with the right customizations," says Steen Lethan. "We worked together on plans for further development of the solution, among other things, to combine our camera recordings with sound – which is a functionality we're implementing now."

The solution

Arbejdernes Landsbank has chosen Milestone Systems Xprotect Business software. The solution today manages recordings from 70 digital cameras that are set up in 19 branches. The cameras are a combination of models: Axis 2120, JVC 1460E and JVC 1480. In each branch, there is a server that is either a Compac or IBM model.

See more information about Arbejdernes Landsbank at www.al-bank.dk or the solution components at www.milestonesys.com, www.axis.com, or <http://pro.jvc.com>

