

**MFI, the largest furniture company in the UK, chose Milestone and Panasonic IP video surveillance solutions to manage security and business processes at its home delivery centres, saving £110,000 yearly on physical guard services at two sites.**

**“The HDC managers are very impressed with the system. It is easy for them to use and it gives them the information they want when they want it. It’s a big improvement over physical patrolling of the perimeters. It handles more than just security – it’s a business management tool.”**

**– Nicholas Stephenson, Group Security Manager at MFI .**

**Challenges:** Managing the manufacture, retail sales and distribution logistics of the UK’s largest furniture company demands comprehensive overview of hundreds of locations. With three shifts running the business around the clock at many sites, MFI needed a flexible and scalable security solution that could offer both central and local management of such security problems as break-ins and vandalism, internal and external theft and fraud. Physical guard services for the Home Delivery Centres, i.e. manning the gatehouses - were costing approximately £55K annually per site.



**Solution:** Milestone XProtect Enterprise software is being installed and supported by Pacific Computers Ltd. to operate Panasonic network camera models 472, 860 and 320 PTZs. In addition, they are using Milestone XProtect Central and XProtect Matrix at several locations for integrated solutions that provide for facial recognition and access control at the entrances. Cameras have been set up at trucking bays, warehouses, admin and computer facilities, reception areas, gates and perimeters.

**Benefits:** MFI got the ability to handle much more than just security. They have saved the cost of guards at the gates, and managers now have flexible remote access to the system wherever they are. The business is protected from both external and internal theft while employee accountability is heightened. Loading and receiving activities are monitored for better handling of deliveries with fast resolution of any questions or claims by sub-suppliers or customers. Adherence to best working practices is monitored to improve employee performance in a round-the-clock working environment. This reduces accidents and damages, boosts quality in the delivery process, and creates more value in the MFI product offerings.

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MFI is the largest household furniture manufacturer, retailer and distributor in the country, delivering kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms and living rooms throughout the UK. With 10,500 employees, the organization includes seven factories in the UK, eight distribution centres, internet website sales, 220 retail stores, 360 Howden Joinery depots, and 30 Sofa Workshops. Home deliveries involve 50 million items per year for 2.5 million households.

Protecting the safety and security of MFI people, property and stock is a job that is now being well assisted with Milestone IP video surveillance software and Panasonic cameras.

Nicholas Stephenson is the Group Security Manager at MFI, a member of ASIS and previous Head of Security for GuinnessUDV at their manufacturing and distribution sites in Jamaica. "Here in the UK the norm is not gun crime as in America or the Caribbean; we have more problems with break-ins and vandalism at night-time, internal and external theft and fraud, safety issues in the workplace, etc."

Nicholas has six Regional Security Managers in the field, three admin personnel at head office, 20 in-house security officers and a number of contract security personnel based at the factories and primary distribution sites. Each regional manager has multiple site & function responsibilities (manufacturing, distribution, retail, trade etc.) and all have access to the Milestone IP video surveillance system.

Pacific Computers have implemented the new IP video solution for MFI. The first installation in 2004 was at their Computer Engineering office and warehouse site, followed by their Credit Control offices, both in Northampton. Systems were then installed in 2005 at two of their HDCs (Home Delivery Centres) which are 24-hour operations in Warrington and Glasgow. It will be rolled out to other sites over time.

**Central approach gives total overview**

Part of the team based in Northampton is using the Milestone XProtect Central for monitoring all four sites. If there are any alarm activations or alerts, it is easy for them to see what is going on and call their key-holding response teams if needed.

MFI use Group 4 Securicor (G4S) for night time response. Managers do not have to be called out at 2 in the morning to unlock and investigate an alarm, with these security professionals trained to handle such events.

"With the Milestone system, we can react fast but verify that there is a valid reason – no false alarm situations," says Nicholas.



"XProtect Central allows MFI to view multiple sites, up to 30 cameras per site, from one location on the network. They now have a central security office with a monitor wall of all the site cameras so when monitored sites close for the day, coverage goes to the central monitoring point. The first man in and last man out are always protected, as are the goods and property at night. The monitoring people on 24 hour shifts ensure that all sites are protected round the clock. They've got full control and overview," explains Paul Tyler, Sales Manager of PacificWave, the Audio Visual division of Pacific Computers, a certified Milestone partner who installs and supports all of MFI's computer systems.

In addition to providing live viewing, images are recorded onto the Milestone database 24 hours a day for easy searching and export of evidence. The motion detection functionality only records when there's activity and flexible scheduling allows setting up defined times, instances and zones for the recording.

"At the first site there are five or six optics on different bays within the warehouse. One area's got three static Panasonic cameras and a PTZ, the other area has four static cameras. That gives adequate coverage internally," says Paul.

MFI also have the security system installed in the computer engineering facility in Northampton, as well as another office block near there.

"There we are protecting our computer equipment and in the office environment protecting our people. The last one out at night always calls our security desk at Northampton to let them know they are leaving so they can monitor their departure. This definitely provides a greater sense of safety," asserts Nicholas. "People do feel more secure at work now. My job is not just protection of our stock: it's very much the protection of our own people, visitors and customers – whoever comes onto our sites."

### **XProtect Matrix sends images on command**

Paul says: "Where we needed people recognition, we've put up Panasonic wide angle lens cameras at the gatehouses that pick up faces and vehicle licence registrations. People have personal IDs and access codes to punch in to a wall station if they're an MFI employee. If they are registered as authorized, the system triggers the barrier to raise and let them through."



Pacific made an integrated solution between the Milestone system and the barrier so the gate can be opened via the software. The camera recording is triggered to start as soon as there is motion in the gate area – when a vehicle or a person approaches. Authorised persons enter a code and the barrier rises automatically, closing behind them.

A visitor who has no code to punch in would press the intercom button: inside the HDC the visitor's image pops up on the computer screen at the office desk. This lets them see and talk via the intercom to say 'come on in' – or not. Whether they have responsibility to check the gates during the day or night, they can go about their other work as the system alerts them when there is activity in those areas by opening a window on their screen with the video of what is happening at the gates.

"Using the Milestone system, we've been able to remove the need for physically manning the gatehouses during the day. We save £55,000 in annual expenses at that site because Milestone now handles the monitoring virtually," smiles Nicholas.

### **Quality assurance in the delivery process**

The Milestone system gives MFI the ability to observe key areas that are prone to issues, like the receiving, returns and loading bays where the goods are loaded onto the trucks for delivery to the customers' homes. The cameras' recordings show exactly what was loaded and when. This assists MFI with improving quality in the delivery process.

"It helps resolve issues, like if a customer calls to report they have not received their kitchen. The manager of that distribution centre can go into the Milestone system and see that the boxes went on to the truck that day," says Nicholas. "This happened just recently: the driver said an item was not delivered because it was not on his truck, but when we searched the system and found the evidence, we could clearly see the item being loaded. When we presented this to the driver, he suddenly 'remembered' that he had in fact delivered it to the previous customer by mistake! He went back to retrieve it, and delivered it to the right customer, keeping the customer satisfied."



In the old days, received deliveries would just get unloaded at night and put somewhere. If there were damages, there was no recourse to prove it wasn't by MFI. Now they can review the unloading process and see exactly what condition exists inside the trailers when they are backed up to delivery bays.

"We had one supplier's truck come in and hit the gate by the fence. We saw him on the video get out to look at his trailer and the gate, get back in his truck, deliver his goods and drive off!" relates Nicholas. "The video evidence got the supplier to pay for repairing that damage - just one of the many benefits of the surveillance."

Any external suppliers now know that how they load items on trailers at their end is very important, because MFI are watching it being unloaded at the sites, and they can see inside the trailers if there are any fallen items or damage of any kind.

### **Virtual walkabouts and remote access**

"The system has helped us to identify attempted thefts – especially at night – and we've been able to reduce internal stock issues as well," reports Nicholas. "I'm a great believer in management by walkabout. Nowadays managers have a lot of paperwork and deskwork at the computer, generating orders and checking them, so there's not enough time anymore to be on the floor. Video surveillance allows us to sit at our desks and look at everything that's happening, to have that overview – a virtual walkabout! On my laptop I can log on to the system anywhere I go and see all cameras or just a few – it's my choice, using the Milestone Remote Client. The manager of the HDC can log on to the system with his laptop when he's at another location and see all that's going on while he's away. Going forward, this system will allow us to always have the overview on activities regardless of where we are physically."

### **Major benefit of improved work practices & reduction in damages**

Nicholas states that the surveillance is particularly useful when an independent, fair and impartial investigation with objective proof is needed as evidence to resolve an issue. "Our people are now so aware that the system is there, both for security and to ensure safety, that they take more care in their jobs. We've seen a major improvement with a reduction in damages since implementation of the Milestone system."

### **Analogue versus the IP approach**

The HDCs are about 9 years old and they only had old 4-camera analogue videotape systems. "I wanted a new solution that would let us monitor 24/7. Pacific Computers have been handling all of the IT and computer needs for MFI, including support, so they invited me to their office to look at Milestone," recalls Nicholas.

Paul adds: "We have a lot of cameras at the Pacific offices monitoring our own security and site to protect our property and people. We were able to demonstrate the full solution capabilities."

Nicholas attests that the Panasonic network camera images are very clear. "The HDC managers are impressed with the system. It is easy for them to use and it gives them the information they want when they want it. It's a big improvement over just physical patrolling of the perimeters. Now, with all the add-ons like Matrix and Central, it's more than just security – its business sense. Any non-IP CCTV system is going to provide these benefits for a business with one location but a business like ours with so many locations is ideal for the IP approach to connect the system and allow remote access," says Nicholas.

Paul continues: "And if there's any reason for extra monitoring – like a special event at one store that will attract bigger crowds - it's easy to add on to the Milestone IP video surveillance by putting up an additional network camera to help protect members of the public. The system setup is modular with the central control station for overall command."

### **A system that's easy to use**

"All of the MFI personnel using the system have had training," states Paul. "Basically if you can use a PC, you can use the Milestone! MFI has it set up with Pacific as the administrator of the system via WAN: Nicholas tells us which employees to give access to and their passwords."

Nicholas comments: "Paul and Pacific provide excellent service. The installation of all systems so far have been spot-on and to time. Any requests to do with the system that the HDC managers have made to Paul have been dealt with directly. Any glitches in the system implementation – and all implementations have them - have been handled in a very timely and professional manner by Paul and the team at Pacific."

[www.mfi.co.uk](http://www.mfi.co.uk), [www.pacificcomputers.co.uk](http://www.pacificcomputers.co.uk), [www.panasonic.com/business/security/home.asp](http://www.panasonic.com/business/security/home.asp)

