

What Does a Good Security Camera System Look Like at a Private Club?

BY NOEL WIXSOM
CC TECH PARTNERS



That's a good question. How many of you thought you would be reading an article about security cameras? We don't recall seeing any articles or CMAA education sessions related to security cameras over the past five years. In fact, guess how many security camera vendors participated at the 2019 Nashville CMAA vendor expo. If you said none, you're right. How many security camera vendors have participated in the last five CMAA Nation Conference vendor expos? Zero.

Why is that? Most private clubs have security cameras. Of the dozens of clubs we've worked with over the past five or six years, only two or three didn't have any security cameras. Commonly, a club will have 20 to 30 cameras installed around the property. Many clubs have more than 60 cameras throughout the campus. The majority of camera systems installed at private clubs today are older, analog-based systems that run on coax cabling and have low-resolution cameras.

So what's a good setup for a private club's security camera system? The answer is tricky. Let's take a step back and look at the significant IT technology platforms installed at a private club. In our view, there are four major IT platforms:

1. **Data** (payroll, email, club management software, Word, Excel and other applications)
2. **Phones**
3. **Wi-Fi** (Member, Guest and Admin Wi-Fi)
4. **Security Cameras**

Each of these systems requires cabling and vendors to support the platforms. Numerous IT vendors can support the data, phone and Wi-Fi platforms and new security camera systems are based on Internet Protocol (IP) standards, but rarely can one vendor support all four of these platforms. The IP standard is also common in data, phone and Wi-Fi systems. Have you ever heard the term VOIP? It stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. What we're seeing is the convergence of the four major IT platforms to IP protocol. This is a positive step forward. Unfortunately, that means that the older analog cameras running on coax cabling are outdated.

What are some of the problems with the older coax analog cameras? The biggest issue with older coax analog cameras is a lack of clarity due to low resolution, which can leave doubt when investigating events. If an event isn't clear, it can be hard to determine what actually happened.

Continued on following page

Continued from Page 7

The other issue with coax systems is that products are proprietary, so they can't easily be switched out. A Honeywell Digital Video Recorder (DVR) would not work with a Pelco DVR. This means that the investment in the coax analog cameras systems is property-wide. A private club can't easily replace a broken Honeywell DVR with another brand's product. The combination of low resolution and proprietary products makes for an outdated security camera platform.

How does a club convert a coax analog security system to an IP security camera system? There are two major factors to consider:

1. It's not easy.
2. It generally takes several years.

The good news is that you can often leverage the investment made in coax cabling and analog cameras. You can convert the coax cameras to an IP security camera platform. This is, effectively, "stalling for time." Most clubs won't have a

\$75,000 budget to replace an outdated security camera system all at once. But if you strategically replace cameras and cabling at \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year – over a three- to four-year period you can "step" your way into the IP security platform. By "step," we mean taking three to four annual steps to make the transition. For example, Step 3 builds on the upgrades you did in step 2, and step 2 builds on step 1. This takes time, but with the right security camera plan, you can pivot away from the coax analog cameras. We have seen numerous clubs that take this approach.

What does a sound IP security camera system look like at a private club? There are several attributes an IP-based security camera system has:

- **One-time licensing costs.** Stay away from IP security camera software that has annual maintenance and support fees. There are a number of solid IP security camera software vendors that have a one-time license fee. This can save thousands of dollars over a five- to ten-year period.

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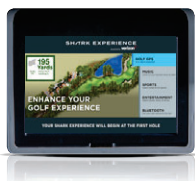
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Continued from Page 8

- **Open architecture.** Use IP security software that runs with Microsoft operating systems and Dell, HP or IBM hardware. This allows the club to change hardware or software vendors easily. Better yet, you can mix and match cameras. Sony cameras can watch the parking lots while Bosch cameras view the dumpster, kitchen receiving areas and wine storage. Open architecture allows the club to use best-in-breed solutions to create the optimal security camera platform.
- **Built-in analytics.** Use cameras that have analytics built right into the cameras. Analytics allow you to enhance the ability to investigate situations. You can do keyword searches, for example. If you wanted to do a search to look at a person wearing a blue sweater, you would type in the keyword "blue sweater," and the security camera software would come up with all the people wearing blue sweaters during the time period specified and follow that person throughout the property. Analytics is a critical component of the IP security camera system.
- **High-resolution cameras.** The higher the megapixels (MP), the higher the resolution. IP cameras come in 3 MP, 5 MP, 7 MP, 9 MP and 10 MP models. We generally see clubs using 5 MP as a base camera.
- **IP cameras that have built-in infrared.** Infrared (IR) cameras allow a high level of clarity in poorly lit areas and at night. An IP camera with infrared will enable you to see an event in your maintenance facility at 3:00 am as clearly as one at 3:00 pm. You need low light for this to work, but generally, that's figured into the setup.

The combination of one-time license costs, open architecture and high-resolution 5 MP-plus IP cameras with built-in analytics and infrared should be the cornerstone of every private club's security camera system. We realize that there are many ways to set up and maintain security camera systems, but a good private club security camera system will include at least several of the above attributes. ■



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