Champions Auto Ferry

Harsens Island is a remote island town with a population of less than 2,000 located 25 miles northeast of downtown Detroit, Michigan. Each summer, Harsens Island is transformed into a vibrant vacation destination with bustling shops, bed and breakfast hotels, and restaurants attracting thousands of tourists as well as boating and outdoor enthusiasts. During the winter, the island all but shuts down, save for the essential businesses and stores that remain open for the island's full-time residents.

One of these essential businesses is Champions Auto Ferry, which provides transportation to and from Harsens Island across the St. Clair River 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Says David Bryson, owner, "There's only one way to get to Harsens Island from mainland Michigan, and it's Champions Auto Ferry. Champions has been providing ferry service to island residents and visitors since 1937 when my grandfather first started the business. Even the harsh winters and icy waters don't stop us from operating."

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The Challenge

Champions operates four ferries, each with the capacity to transport up to 100 people or 12 automobiles at any one time. With departures as often as every 15 minutes, the sheer volume of passengers and cars poses a challenge to track and manage, particularly during peak season. Additionally, the small staff sometimes has to quell rowdy passengers. "We see the typical behaviors that any company operating a transportation service would see," said Bryson. "Sometimes people simply act up, or have had one too many beers at their friend's holiday barbeque, and we need to address it for the comfort and security of the other passengers."

To better monitor the number of cars being transported on the ferries, and to ensure a safe and relaxing environment for passengers, the company sought a video surveillance solution that would record transactions and activities and serve as a reliable backup if particular incidents needed further examination or investigation.

Champions also needed a video surveillance system for another crucial reason. Because of Harsens Island's proximity to the Canadian border, many Canadians routinely visit the island as well as mainland Michigan. Unfortunately, passengers have also included non-Canadians seeking illegal entry into the United States.

"There is no official port of entry into the U.S. close to Harsens Island. Once Champions became aware that unauthorized people could be entering the U.S via our ferries, we wanted to do what we could to help minimize the situation. Being able to capture the images of everyone traveling on the boats and provide this footage to the authorities if needed was of paramount importance to us."

For cameras to be installed on the boats, Champions needed an IP video surveillance solution that would run on Champions' wireless mesh network. Bryson began actively looking for such a solution and turned to Data Consultants, a systems integrator specializing in video surveillance and

wireless mesh technology. Joshua Bylsma, a Physical Security Consultant for Data Consultants, worked with Champions Auto Ferry to quickly identify the best surveillance system that would meet all of Champions' needs.

Bylsma recalls, "Champions already had a legacy surveillance system in place. It was an outdated VHS system recording with old black and white cameras. It had obvious draw backs – poor image quality, unreliable VHS tapes, and poor field of view coverage. With Champions' 24/7 operations, we needed something that provided high-resolution images in an outdoor, day/night environment".

The Solution

Data Consultants recommended to Champions the VideoIQ iCVR, the world's first and only intelligent video surveillance camera with built-in digital recording. The iCVR is an all-in-one product that includes a state-of-the-art wide dynamic range day/night camera, an embedded DVR, powerful analytics and video management software. The camera had everything Champions was looking for in a video surveillance solution, including the ability to automatically capture critical events at the highest frame rate and quality, while continuously recording everything at a lesser quality to maximize storage. And because video is stored in the camera, network requirements are minimal.

"The minimal bandwidth and storage requirements of the iCVR made it a great choice for Champions, particularly because of their need to record 24 hours a day and operate the cameras on a wireless mesh network," said Bylsma. "Because the iCVR stores all video at the edge and the analytics are performed at the camera itself, it was possible for Champions to have cameras on both the mainland and island while providing room for growth for additional cameras and systems on the wireless network. The iCVR was the perfect solution for this type of topology."

Data Consultants worked with Champions to install the cameras, which took about a day and a half to complete. "Installation was very simple and went off without a hitch," said Bryson. "Josh, his team and VideoIQ were there the whole time and managed the process from start to finish. They were very attentive and made sure the cameras were optimally placed to capture the best field of view."

> *"VideoIQ has made things much more efficient for us. With the iCVR search function, we can easily go back and audit our daily activities or examine any incident that warrants a closer look."*
>
> - David Bryson, Owner, Champions Auto Ferry

The Result

Once the cameras were up and running, Champions was quickly impressed with the iCVR's powerful event detection capabilities that instantly notify them of any potential threats, including intruders or vehicles on the property. Additionally, the iCVR allows Champions staff to easily find transactions or activities that took place during a specific day or period of time. "VideoIQ has made things much more efficient for us," said Bryson. "With the iCVR search function, we can easily go back and audit our daily activities or examine any incident that warrants a closer look."

In the future, Champions plans to deploy a special iCVR application that automatically counts and reports to the network the number of vehicles traveling on the ferries, which will save Champions considerable time, energy and expense in their daily auditing procedures. Champions also intends to install more iCVRs on all of its ferries and on the property, providing a comprehensive surveillance solution that protects them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the entire company.

"We are committed to ensuring the safety of our passengers at all times and having a state-of-the-art surveillance system is essential," said Bryson. "VideoIQ's iCVR, combined with the know-how and service of Data Consultants, gives us the security protection we need to deliver on this customer commitment."

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