



BODY WORN CAMERAS

Richie McBride explains how integrating video management systems with body worn cameras can give the advantage back to security personnel

CCTV has long been relied upon for on-site security and is utilised to keep surveillance and monitoring at any location. However, limitations do exist as static CCTV cameras can only monitor a limited area, often without audio. One of the most important recent innovations in this market has been the ability to integrate existing CCTV video management systems (VMS) with wearable body worn cameras (BWCs), enabling organisations to unify a

site's security and monitoring system and create mobile and first-person viewpoints to add contextual detail to footage.

Specialist software is able to integrate body worn camera surveillance with existing Video Management Systems for fixed IP camera networks. This enables ONVIF compliant VMSs to be compatible with body cameras, streamlining live footage and audio of incidents as they unfold, for users to review in real time or after the event. Cameras integrate seamlessly with leading CCTV Video Management Systems,

Body worn cameras provide a good source of evidence for police officers, while ensuring that they also play by the rules

meaning captured footage can be instantly shared and viewed by security staff.

Fixed security cameras connected to a VMS are a powerful tool for monitoring and securing many different environments, from retail floors to distribution centres. With body worn cameras – which are attached to the uniform – staff need only press a button on the lightweight camera to activate recording, which in turn can send a live feed of the situation back to a centrally based control room, where it can be viewed and listened to by security staff, and action taken. These cameras also have the ability to send an SMS message alert once activated, sharing the live footage stream with designated personnel, all without having to download an app.

This latest innovation means body worn cameras are capable of streaming live video and audio feeds from multiple perspectives and viewpoints to a control room, while simultaneously recording footage in HD quality locally to the device for the creation of complete evidence packages.

Body worn cameras have been proven to help improve the safety of those in public-facing roles, while producing compelling legal evidence when needed. BWCs can provide two-fold protection to

INITIAL TRIALS OF BODY WORN CAMERAS IN PRISONS HAVE BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED

staff – firstly, members of the public naturally change and moderate their behaviour for the better when they realise they are being recorded – but more importantly the cameras can then be used, when needed, to alert colleagues to an incident, to obtain evidential quality footage to secure convictions or to uphold the account of staff in the event of a complaint or incident.

Studies examining the use of body cameras show they make a real difference in protecting frontline staff and the public. Not only do they deter aggression and in many cases eliminate the need to activate a panic alarm or radio during an incident, but they also help staff feel valued, safe and more protected.

In order to deliver the benefits, a body worn camera system must be simple to deploy, manage and use; the wearable camera is a tool for the user to protect themselves – but it isn't the focus of their job, nor should it be. It is essential they are easy to use and easy to deploy with minimal training. In addition, the back-office management suite must be secure and able to deliver court-admissible evidence packages.

As with all new technology, there are questions around the security of data, access to information, and the regulations around use, which pose as initial challenges when introducing BWC to a new market.

Edesix has worked hard to ensure that its devices are secure and encrypted, that data cannot be obtained from the cameras without secure log-in credentials, and that only authorised users have access to review and manage footage. Edesix has found that, due to successful deployments to trusted organisations such as PSNI and HMPS, that these challenges have lessened. Although still a relatively young industry, there has

been huge growth in the body worn camera market over the last few years. Increasingly, more and more sectors are looking at using devices to improve security, transparency and training.

An expanding marketplace also brings about increased challenges for suppliers. Edesix is at the forefront of innovation within this sector, and as demand grows for its product it is essential that new cameras and accessories are produced to meet the growing needs of users.

Other recent innovations in the wearable camera market include:

INCIDENT RECORDERS

Body worn cameras don't all come in the one (large) size. Many assume that they are only designed for police and security guards, but new smaller-sized Incident Recorders, such as the Edesix VideoTag, are designed for regular staff in retail, campuses and hospitals who might face abuse and aggression only at certain times in their work. Incident Recorders can live stream to a central security room, much like a wi-fi-enabled BWC, to complement a fixed IP camera system on site, and furthermore, they can remain on standby for up to six months, making them manageable for staff.

Recently, it was announced that wearable cameras were being trialled by leading UK retailer, Waitrose, which is equipping home delivery drivers with devices to enhance the transparency of their new service. The will see delivery staff enter the homes of customers using smart lock technology, allowing them to deliver goods directly into the homes of customers when requested. Commenting on the trial, Archie Mason, Waitrose head of business development, said there was "an increasing demand" among customers to make shopping "even more convenient to fit around their busy lifestyles".

SIMPLIFYING BWC WORKFLOWS

Body worn camera deployments can take advantage of existing security installations using RFID, which many already use for door access control systems for example. Security staff can assign themselves cameras instantly and easily using RFID Touch Assign technology by simply tapping their RFID cards to the reader. Only cameras fully charged, ready to use and fit for the profile of the user can be assigned, ensuring that any BWCs are managed properly without the need for a member of staff to be present to hand out cameras individually. Once assigned via an RFID card, that camera is then linked to the wearer to provide crucial information about who recorded what and when.

HOME WORKERS

New technology means an organisation's body worn camera network can be deployed to employees working from home or remote offices. Staff operating from home, such as bailiffs, simply retrieve their BWC from a dock attached to a network device located at their home at the start of their shift and return it at the end of the day. All footage and camera management information is then forwarded to a central server during low broadband use periods, or via the cloud, for review by colleagues based at HQ.

This allows flexible working for staff, while ensuring the integrity and security of recorded footage.

PRISONS

CCTV surveillance has been widely employed within prisons since the nineties, and its prevalence has been growing year on year. Modern facilities are designed with integrated CCTV systems at the forefront, which reflects the importance of video technology already present in the judicial services sector. The ability to keep track of inmates' actions, particularly in communal areas, and record video footage of incidents as evidence grants wardens greater levels of control and supports disciplinary structures in prisons. Yet CCTV technology is limited, and the extent to which it can affect improved inmate behaviour has not been thoroughly tested. The few studies that have been conducted showed that while CCTV had a positive impact on non-violent behaviour, it largely failed to reduce violent behaviour, which is the most damaging to morale, life and property.

The limitation with CCTV systems lies in their passive nature; it's all too easy for prisoners to forget about their existence during a heated, spontaneous and possibly violent confrontation.

A key component of the drive in the UK to improve, not only security, but also prison conditions for inmates and staff alike, centred on a nationwide deployment of state-of-the-art BWC technology. Justice Minister Claire

Sugden commented on the recent roll-out of Edesix VideoBadge BWCs: "I believe this is a significant step in ensuring that prison officers have the right tools to perform their difficult and challenging role and will contribute to a safer prison environment for both staff and prisoners."

It is hoped the cameras will foster a safer working environment for wardens and instil greater harmony between inmates by acting as a visible deterrent for possible outbursts of abusive behaviour and violence. Through equipping themselves with BWCs, prison

USERS NEED ONLY PRESS A BUTTON ON THE LIGHTWEIGHT CAMERA TO ACTIVATE RECORDING

staff can quell violent behaviour before it even begins. Prisoners are made aware that both their actions and the staff's actions are being carefully monitored and recorded in evidential HD quality to support disciplinary action or even criminal charges. Initial trials of BWCs in prisons have been well received by all parties involved, and since the cameras are only mounted on prison wardens the impact of inmate privacy is minimised when compared with traditional CCTV. BWCs also work in conjunction with CCTV to supplement static recorded footage with point-of-view visual and, crucially, audio evidence ●

Richie McBride is the managing director and co-founder of Edesix Ltd. which provides its solutions to those in public-facing roles, such as police, security personnel, emergency services workers and the transport industry.

