

Winning Formula: Great Service, Superior Quality

Shoe Retailer with 475 Stores Relies on March Networks Video Surveillance Technology

Great service with a personal touch and superior quality is a winning formula in any business. It's also the main reason Rack Room Shoes relies on March Networks video surveillance systems to fight fraud and shrinkage at its more than 475 stores across the United States.



Regular visits from March Networks® keep the retailer's Loss Prevention Director Johnny Turner up to date on the latest technology, and technical support staff are just a phone call away.

Rack Room Shoes, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, selected March Networks as its video surveillance partner in 2006.

"March Networks has an abundance of preferred features which were not offered by our previous vendor," recalled Turner. "Specifically, March Networks systems were IP ready. IP cameras are a big investment; however we felt the technology was needed in our stores. Having hybrid recorders that handled both analog and IP cameras made March Networks extremely attractive."

Another feature that won over Rack Room Shoes is March Networks' motion histogram, which highlights activity in the software interface to help investigators zero in quickly on video evidence.

"The motion histogram is a nice option when you're trying to go back and review

video," said Rack Room Shoes Senior Investigator Mark Seaford. "It reduces the amount of time it takes to research an incident."

Rack Room Shoes' loss prevention staff uses their video surveillance system to follow up on suspicious transactions highlighted by their exception-based reporting software.

Seaford and his staff are able to review reports of voids and no-sales, and immediately click through to the associated video.

Rack Room Shoes operates more than 475 stores in 34 states — from Florida to California — under the Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoe Warehouse banners. The stores are located in both strip and indoor malls, as well as in standalone locations. The average Rack Room Shoes location is 6,000 square feet in size and is equipped with a single recorder and eight cameras, while the larger Off Broadway Shoe Warehouse locations average 20,000 square feet and have 16 cameras. ▶

"Having hybrid recorders that handle both analog and IP cameras made March Networks extremely attractive."

— Johnny Turner,
Director of Loss Prevention,
Rack Room Shoes



“We also saw a tremendous drop in shrinkage when we started using the March Networks system.”

— **Mark Seaford**,
Senior Investigator,
Rack Room Shoes

The company acquired its first March Networks recorders in 2006-2007, and began transitioning to newer and more advanced 8000 Series Hybrid NVRs and IP cameras in early 2013.

“It has been a gradual migration,” said Seaford. “Everything we’re doing on a go-forward basis is IP; we’re only replacing the existing analog cameras as they fail, or as we remodel or open new stores.”

Seaford, who uses the system daily, gives March Networks high marks for ease of use, reliability, video quality and backward compatibility.

“The March Networks video surveillance systems are easy to use and very robust,” said Seaford. “We’ve had very few recorders fail over the years and video quality is superb. Backward compatibility and hybrid capability are very important to us because they have allowed us to migrate to newer 8000 Series recorders and from analog to IP without having to incur the expense of replacing all of our legacy equipment at the same time.”

Three years into the transition, approximately 100 of Rack Room Shoes’ 475 stores are equipped with March Networks-compatible Axis IP cameras.

Rack Room Shoes takes full advantage of the enhanced storage capacity of the 8000 Series NVRs.

“Once you incur the cost of the NVR, storage is a minimal investment,”

said Turner. “We went with 12 TB (four 3 TB drives) when 12 was the maximum, and now with 4 TB drives available, we’ll be maxing out at 16 TB. You can never have too much storage.”

Access to video is restricted to corporate headquarters in Charlotte, NC.

“In the past, part of our business model was to permit some of our stores to have video access,” stated Turner. “However, we now prefer to have our employees on the sales floor serving customers.” “My philosophy is: if you do something every day, you can do it faster, quicker and better than if you just do it once in a while, so we run all of our investigations out of Charlotte.”

Help desk personnel also have access to video from the stores to troubleshoot point-of-sale (POS) and data communication problems. Using the camera view at the POS station while talking to a cashier on the phone, they’re able to troubleshoot an issue and make sure all of the cables are properly connected.

“It cuts down on the time it takes to diagnose a problem and get our POS system up and running again,” said Seaford.

Rack Room Shoes originally acquired video surveillance to help reduce losses from POS fraud and deter shoplifters, but it has also come in handy for investigating liability and worker compensation claims.

“Shortly after acquiring our March Networks video surveillance solution, a claim was filed that was readily disproved based on the video of the incident,” recalled Turner. “We also saw a tremendous drop in shrinkage when we started using the March Networks system. In an open-stock store shrinkage can be an issue, so cameras are a huge deterrent.”

Overseeing loss prevention for a nationwide chain of stores is a big job, but with the right technology, and the experience of seasoned professionals like Johnny Turner and Mark Seaford, it’s a walk in the park. ▼

