

Executive Summary

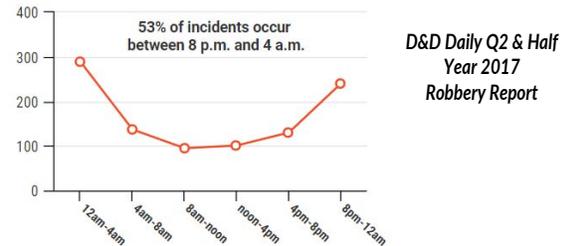
The number of convenience stores in the US, at last count is 154,195 and is growing at double digits annually.¹ This growth trend is expected for the next several years. A key to convenience store success is the easy access to interstate and main thoroughfares, but this easy access plus the fact that they have a “predominant cash” business model also makes them susceptible to robbery and theft. The D&D Daily reported a total of 5,974 robberies and burglaries FTY 2016 in the retail space; a 28% increase from 2016.² Out of the top 15 retail chains leading in robbery and theft are five convenience/gas station retail chains. What is more alarming, is a number of deaths that are resulting from these types of crime. 29% of Convenience stores lead retail death by 29%. The resulting damage from violent robberies can be physical, economic, and psychological in nature. This Case Study presents a tested solution with positive reduction in crime while improving employee safety by enhancing customer welcoming experience using **First Line - Facial Recognition**.

About the Client

Riverview MotoMart (Installed April 2016)- Family owned company with over 79 stores in the Midwest. The Riverview location at 11000 Riverview Blvd is in the city of St. Louis located on the last exit on 270 before heading east into Illinois. This store was plagued with three armed robberies within the first six months of 2016.

Hampton BP (Installed July 2016) - One of five BP gas station locations serving the south city St. Louis metro area located at 6901 Hampton Ave. The owner was concerned with criminal activity within his area and the increase in convenience store robbery happening within south city St. Louis.

Washington AMPM (Installed July 2017) - One of 6 AMPM gas stations serving the city of Yakima, WA installed by Skyline Communications. This owner was plagued with armed robberies earlier in the year and the violent death of a AMPM clerk at another store location.



The Challenges

Aside from video surveillance which is almost always forensic in nature and assists after an incident has occurred, there are typically three solutions proposed to the convenience store industry for robbery deterrence. The first is a “wall through” cash window, the cost of this solution is nearly \$10,000. The second solution for late night business is the building of an indoor encasement of “bullet proof glass” which can cost well over \$15,000. The third solution is a human guard or officer to protect the store, especially at night. The typical guard deployment is very expensive and costs approximately \$43,000 per year for one 8-hour shift per day. Guards have proven to be effective, however also bring numerous liability risks to the businesses.

While safety is a primary consideration of their operators and patrons, the main goal of a convenience store is to become a place where the customer is appreciated and enjoys a good shopping experience. Preventing the robbery before it even enters the store is vital. There is nothing about the proposed solutions above which leads to achieving this goal. Some of the examples limited the customer experience and could reduce the stores potential ROI. Not to mention, they are costly fixes which create an atmosphere of isolation and perception of high crime.



First Line Convenience Store Application

The Solution

Improving the customer experience by “at the door greeting” using **First Line - Facial Recognition** and Axis Communications IP video solutions. Q3505 MKII Cameras are mounted on the front of the convenience store entry ways, along with signage and LED verification to notify patrons upon valid entry. Store owners can choose to have voice activation to welcome and instruct patrons upon arriving at the door or utilize LED signage. As a patron approaches the door – they look at the camera and First Line recognizes a face then actuates the lock to open allowing the patron easy entrance into the store. A patron approaching with a mask will not be recognized and not allowed in the store. This product works with existing access control equipment which provides the operators the ability to keep the undesirable outside the premises and gives time so they can call for support from local agencies. If a store does not have electronic door locks, they can easily be retrofit to the door. The access control functionality can be outfitted with a switch operated by the cashier/clerk that allows them to actuate the system at a time in the evening or if they see any unwanted activity or violence outside the convenience store, they can immediately lock the door to keep indoor employees and patrons safe. This solution installation works in concert with the existing surveillance, door locks and provides more options to the clerks.

Both stores have reported having 700-1000 people per day. During the evening hours, the most active hours are from 10-11pm which also correlate with the timeframe in which most robberies are occurring in their vicinity. The convenience stores operate **First Line** between 5pm-7am. Typical install time is within one-two days depending on maglock requirements and can be operational within hours. The clerks take less than an hour to train and feel comfortable with the new system. Clerks will have a visual monitor that will also display the system in real time.



Washington AMPM - Install Photos, Yakima, WA with Axis Q3505 MK II Dome Cameras

Results

After the first initial 30 days of install, our representatives interviewed the store managers about the application and about how the patrons of the store have reacted to the new technology. Patrons who are women customers and employees) love the system. Several women customers have commented that the system makes them feel safer during their visit at night. Employees find the overall process easy to use and interact with. The Riverview store manager has reported that he has been able to move affected employees of prior robbery instances back to the night shift. Patrons have responded to the system and have adapted quickly to the new method entry.

Ten reported police service calls were conducted to Riverview within the months of June-July 2016 before our installation. From Aug 2016-2017, only two reported service calls had been made to the Riverview location. The Riverview store manager is very pleased with the +95% reduction of police service calls and accompanied removal negative interactions with suspicious persons, loitering, and vehicle theft events. The store manager of Riverview is also happy to report a robbery free year from Aug 2016 - 2017. Crime is still occurring in the vicinity around both stores quite steadily, but both the AM-PM and MotoMart stores have not been robbed since the installation of **First Line - Facial Recognition**.

Conclusion

The application implementation, designed with seasoned law enforcement expertise, has been effective in reducing costs of operations, increasing employee morale and consumer confidence in the municipality, but most importantly stopping a robbery. Not only is this application preventing robbery, the calls to service and loitering has also been reduced on the premise. The convenience store owners/managers have proclaimed the original goals of employee safety, a community based safe shopping experience has been achieved with the installations of **First Line**. The cost of the solution was much lower than anticipated, and the aesthetics helped provide a welcoming atmosphere with a certainty of deterrence. The application implementation, designed with seasoned law enforcement expertise, has been effective in reducing costs of operations, increasing employee morale and consumer confidence in the municipality, but most importantly stopping a robbery. The evidence shows that this application of **First Line** reduces robbery, the calls for police service and loitering on the premise. The convenience store owners/managers have proclaimed the original goals of improving employee safety, enhancing a community based safe shopping experience has been achieved with the installations of **First Line**. The cost of the solution was much lower than anticipated, and the aesthetics helped provide a welcoming atmosphere with a certainty of deterrence.

For more information about Blue Line Technology contact:
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Reference:

- 1 - <http://www.nacsonline.com/Research/FactSheets/ScopeofIndustry/Pages/IndustryStoreCount.aspx>
- 2 - <http://www.d-ddaily.com/archivesdaily/D&DDaily01-17-17.htm#News>
- 3 - <http://www.orcinfo.com/shoplifting-felony-threshold-report.html>

"The deterrence capability alone has significant benefits and our loss control consultant has praised this as one of the most significant safety enhancements he has seen in years. The most important outcome is that our employees and our store manager feel much safer with this solution."

Robert Forsyth, President, Moto, Inc



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