

Why Audio? Why Not?

It's 2014 and time for a new way of thinking when it comes to security. It's kind of like our five senses, we have each one for a reason and they are all equally valuable. We need to start giving audio the same amount of attention that we give video when it relates to security. Both audio and video should be on the same playing field but the present reality is that our industry remains focused on video only systems.

While video surveillance has long been viewed as the primary technology in a system, the time has come to recognize audio monitoring as an equally critical component. In today's security landscape where tragic events regularly make headlines, it is imperative that both video and audio reign as kings of the security world to further enhance safety. Why audio so many ask? The answer is compelling.

Imagine walking into your office wearing noise-canceling earphones. You take a detailed look around and everything appears to be okay so you sit down to work. However, in this hypothetical scenario, there is someone shouting for help outside your window. Had you been able to hear their cries for help then you may have called for immediate assistance. The reality is that using video without audio is like living in a silent movie. Let's examine a real-life event where audio performed where video alone couldn't:

- June 2012 in Greece, New York, Karen Klein Harassed on a School Bus: four schoolboys verbally abused this 68-year-old bus monitor with violent and graphic threats. While the bus' video surveillance captured footage of the boys pointing at her it was the audio footage recorded and later posted to YouTube that provided the most potent evidence – the boys' voices lashing out at her. Ultimately the boys were punished with fines and suspension because of this evidence of verbal assault.

And that's not all audio is capable of. In fact, there have been many recent strides toward innovative technology in the audio monitoring field. For example, using a network based two-way audio system along with video, security staff can remotely interact with suspicious persons in real time, rather than needing to physically send a guard to the area. With so many security capabilities, why does audio remain behind video when it comes to surveillance?

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According to a recent report from research firm Memoori Business Intelligence titled “The Physical Security Business 2013 to 2017,” the global market for security products was expected to total \$23.4 billion at the end of 2013 with video surveillance representing over half (52 percent) of this number, bringing in \$12.26 billion. As if those weren’t already impressive numbers, what’s more is that research firm, IHS, expects the global demand for video surveillance to grow by more than 12 percent compared to 2013. In taking a look at audio, IHS reported that in 2013 more than 70 percent of network cameras shipped globally had either unidirectional or multidirectional audio capability; however these functions are estimated to be used less than 10 percent of the time.

It is vital for security professionals to recognize that they are limiting themselves with utilizing video only - audio needs to be part of the overall security plan. One of the key benefits of audio monitoring is the fact that they are compatible with a wide range of other security devices, including cameras, recorders, and software. Specifically, audio serves the security needs of a wide range of organizations including: law enforcement, education, quick service restaurants, convenience stores, healthcare providers, warehouse facilities, utilities and infrastructure, and retail industries.

When it comes to security, audio is critical. There are many ways to use audio, such as monitoring high traffic areas to help keep people safe, equipping businesses with audio security to help them alleviate loss-prevention, providing employee training, conducting day-to-day business and much more. For example, a local fast-food chain may want to use audio monitoring to ensure that employees are making orders correctly and/or to ensure they are not stealing resources from the organization.

In addition, a key benefit of audio monitoring is that it helps to combat false alarms and provides a secondary verification in the case of an emergency, robbery, security threat or other intrusion by allowing companies to both see and hear what is going on (when combined with video security technology). With audio monitoring, alarms can also be activated based on audio sounds (sounds above a specified, adjustable decibel level) captured by audio monitoring products. For example, in November 2013, police in Evansville, Indiana received a verified audio alarm at a local body shop. When they arrived, two suspects were taken into custody and each had property from the body shop on them. What’s great about a verified alarm is the fact that it provides real-time confirmation of an intrusion via visual or audio monitoring and notifies of an unauthorized entry or attempted unauthorized entry. This technology truly provides companies and businesses with the reassurance they need to keep their assets safe.

It is just a matter of time before more and more major corporations start tapping the power of audio for their security needs. With that being said, let us make audio a more integral part of the overall security discussion now and not delay the inevitable. Let us not fall behind as industry leaders but instead start initiating these conversations. We can no longer afford to turn a deaf ear towards audio when it comes to delivering a complete, all-around security solution.

About Louroe Electronics

Located in Van Nuys, California, Louroe Electronics® has been the world leader in audio monitoring technology since its inception in 1979. Recognized globally, Louroe Electronics’ products are used in 50 countries and are utilized by both the private sector and government. The company’s Verifact® line of microphones, complementing base stations, and communication accessories, provide line level output to interface with various digital electronics. For over three decades, Louroe Electronics has maintained rigorous standards to ensure their products provide reliability, durability, and excellent performance for their customers’ needs.