

Partnership approach can help retailers get the best out of monitoring and security

By [Rodney Taylor](#)

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From a smart retail perspective, it is crucial to understand that monitoring stock and other assets through camera surveillance and a variety of Internet of Things (IoT) sensors stretches further than the stores themselves. Greater importance is being placed on protecting the entire value chain, which starts at distribution. Beyond just security, this technology is also being used to enhance operations and reduce costs.



Rodney Taylor, managing director at Guardian Eye, a Vivica Group company. Image supplied

Distribution centres, many of which may feature 24/7 operations, are a vital cog in the chain for retailers, helping them ensure that their stores can be stocked with the right products as quickly as possible. However, these high-value centres - while a store might contain R3m or R4m of stock, a distribution centre might hold R50 million in merchandise - are the target of criminal activity as well, as seen during the July 2021 riots.

As such, it is no surprise that retailers are investing significantly in improving safety and operations at their distribution centres, and this starts with better perimeter security.

Virtual guarding

Such requirements call for intelligent guarding, which combines computer vision with machine learning to turn any camera

stream into a feed of intelligent alerts for complete risk visibility. Meanwhile, virtual guarding eliminates the need for guard patrol, while the ability to check in as often as you like means that criminals are unable to study and determine specific patrol times.

It also saves retailers from spending on unnecessary security call-out fees, as being able to check in first results in a 99% reduction in false alarms.



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In addition, with it being a managed monitoring solution, there is a constant eye on distribution centres 24/7/365 from a centralised Nerve Centre, which means that the retailers' security provider and the South African Police Service are alerted when the retailers' premises are at risk.

Unfortunately, not all threats are from external sources, and pilferage by staff is a problem that exists. To make matters worse, it does not help to simply hire people to monitor footage from security cameras if they do not know what exactly to be on the lookout for.

Energy monitoring

As mentioned earlier, it is not all about security either. Energy consumption is one of the biggest cost factors for any type of business and managing it in real-time can be labour-intensive and time-consuming.

By investing in smart energy management, retailers can measure energy consumption and take corrective action in real-time. Unnecessary energy consumption can be identified even after hours, and behavioural change can be implemented immediately.

This includes measuring the energy usage of individual appliances and switching unutilised appliances off where needed. By reducing consumption businesses can offset the impact of future energy and tax increases while using the savings for other business requirements.

Then, there is temperature monitoring: firstly, outside temperature often determines your energy usage inside, and factoring in the temperature can provide greater insight into a business's electricity consumption patterns.

Secondly, in the case of distribution centres, retailers might have sections that are dedicated to cold storage for perishables such as dairy or meat and these need to be continually monitored as well - if something goes wrong here the cold chain will be affected all the way down.



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Asset tracking

Of course, stock needs to be moved from distribution centres to stores, and it is vulnerable here too. Smart Asset Tracking can be used to monitor the location of any movable business asset and can also act as a backup device for company vehicles with tracking units already installed. These devices connect automatically to an IoT-specific network and the information from the asset is accessible from anywhere via the IoT platform.

Device transmission settings, various alerts and reports can also be set up and remotely adjusted via the platform to suit a retailer's requirements - this includes setting up geo-fences (virtual boundaries), as well as being notified when a vehicle leaves the distribution centre, and again when the vehicle arrives at its intended destination.

Of course, the moveable asset is continually monitored, with the retailer's security company and law enforcement authorities being alerted in case of an incident such as a hijacking.

Looking beyond security again, retailers can now invest in temperature sensors inside the semi-trailers of trucks carrying perishable goods to the list of devices they monitor; if there is a problem with the refrigeration en route, the customer can be notified and they can take quicker action to prevent the loss of their goods.



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IoT and analytics specialists

Only now do we reach the area that most people think about when it comes to smart retail security - the local retailer. Here technology is used across a wide variety of areas in order to improve safety as well as enhance operations at the store.

With a turnkey solution from Guardian Eye, perimeter management takes care of security, while intelligent camera surveillance takes care of counting people in queues, identifying how many people there are in the store in total, to warn staff of people loitering outside the store who might present a threat, or to simply help management verify store staff clocking in and out.

All of this allows each party to focus on what they are best at: the retailer can focus on improving their operations and increasing sales, security companies can focus on responding to incidents when they happen, while the security partner focuses on what it is good at - a surveillance, IoT and analytics specialist with a nerve centre that monitors cameras and sensors and then works as an optimiser and enabler to any security company, helping them expand their reach and capabilities through the use of technology.

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