

Making the Case for Recording Digital Interviews

Executive Summary

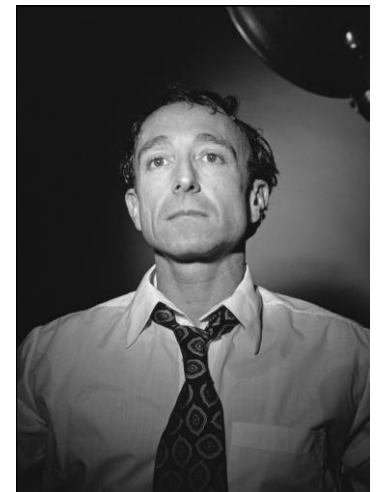
Law enforcement nationwide is turning to video recording and storage solutions for interviews conducted by police officers. The typical Video Interview System (VIS) offers several advantages for law enforcement, police and district attorneys:

- **Protection of rights.** Both citizens and police officers benefit.
- **Increased conviction rates.** Proper interview procedures are conclusively documented. (Audio alone does not suffice; video gives the complete picture.)
- **Improved protection from lawsuits.** Video recording discourages suits against officers and helps gain dismissal of other suits, thus protecting departments against expensive judgments. (Avoiding the cost of one lawsuit can pay for an entire VIS.)
- **Greater productivity.** Officers spend less time in court and more time on the street. A VIS streamlines evidence search and retrieval as well.



The VIS may include from one to dozens of interview sites, with multiple rooms at each site. The most sophisticated solutions are Digital Video Asset Management systems that capture video recordings, safeguard those video assets, and provide online access.

More benefits for detectives and district attorneys. A professional VIS manages not only interview videos but all digital evidence, including video from in-car and surveillance cameras, text documents, scanned photographs, and audio from 911 calls. Detectives can consolidate evidence for a case and share it with DAs, who can present evidence in court.



Proven, cost-effective solutions are available now. The experience of three major cities, Toronto, Chicago and Washington, D.C., shows that the right VIS can meet law enforcement requirements at an affordable cost, even in the largest and most complex scenarios. This white paper examines those experiences and presents VIS.

Making the Case for Recording Digital Interviews

DVAM vs. DVR: a comparison shows there's no comparison

Some law enforcement departments may be tempted to purchase a digital video recorder (DVR) at an electronics retailer, plus a DVD burner. A professional Digital Video Asset Management (DVAM) system, complete with powerful server and backup options, offers far greater performance and protection of video evidence.

Key features for video used as evidence	DVAM	DVR
Chain of Custody	Yes	No
Configurable index data to store and retrieve video files	Yes	No
Multi-tiered security to control access to video files	Yes	No
Text overlay identifying recording info (time, place, etc.)	Yes	Some
Audio and Video Recording Synchronization	Yes	Some
Scalable architecture to support system expansion	Yes	No
Online video file storage available to support investigators	Yes	No

Software is as critical as hardware

It is important to note that all DVAM systems are not created equal—and it's more than a matter of hardware.

A generic solution will lack software that meets the evidentiary needs of the criminal justice system. A DVAM solution that meets those needs will provide automatic logging of access and operational requests to maintain chain of custody; tamper detection; and controlled access with role-based, multi-tier security.

Such security enables video files to be ready available to a wide variety of authorized users such as detectives, DAs, and users in other organizations, whether within the department or in outside law enforcement agencies, while ensuring that files are protected and chain of custody is assured. Also, the system should allow full control of the metadata linked to the video—for example, the officer's name and case number. It should be possible to add other metadata as needed—for example, "gang affiliation." Search and retrieval functions can be linked to metadata, or case folders can simply be browsed for immediate access to video assets.

Making the Case for Recording Digital Interviews

Scalability and flexibility should be part of the solution

Law enforcement in smaller cities may be able to use a stand-alone, workstation-based solution. A metropolitan area or government agency may require an enterprise-wide, networked solution. Or the solution may lie somewhere in between.

A truly scalable solution should be able to accommodate virtually any physical layout and the business processes used to capture video. The solution would expand to include more interview rooms as the organization grows, and would allow using the video storage and management capabilities for other evidence-related video that also needs protection, e.g. in-car and surveillance video. Ideally the solution would accommodate all types of digital evidence, such as photographs, PDFs, Microsoft files (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) in a single case file.



Large departments and agencies may have interview rooms dispersed across multiple geographical locations. Instead of having several single-site systems that are independent, it is more efficient to provide video storage at a central location with remote locations having online access. Such networking also allows efficient sharing of video evidence by criminal justice personnel.

A DVAM solution also should be flexible, allowing configuration to meet requirements such as the use of overt or covert cameras/microphones. The solution should fit into the existing IT environment, i.e. be independent of computer platform, operating system, and database. And the solution should integrate with other existing systems used by the organization, such as case and records management systems. As a configuration example, in New York City the district attorney's office has 41 interview rooms in a single location. At this site data protection would include system redundancy to prevent loss of video during recording. Local storage of data is important, but networking would not be a major consideration in this design.

Making the Case for Recording Digital Interviews

Storage costs and considerations

A DVAM can be designed to store video on a server, DVDs, tape, or any combination. Whatever the storage medium, video requires about 500 MB to 1 GB of storage per hour when using the latest format (MPEG4) to optimize electronic file compression.

Fortunately, with today's high-capacity servers, tape drives, and data storage arrays, that requirement can be supported cost-effectively. In addition, legislative and policy variables are significant factors in sizing a system:

- **Type of interview recorded.** For capital crimes? Violent crimes? All criminal cases? All cases of any kind?
- **How long the evidence is maintained.** All cases for one year? Until the case is closed? Until appeals are settled?
- **How the evidence is stored.** On an online server? Near online server with automated retrieval? Offline external storage? This involves a trade-off between accessibility and cost, as shown in the table.

Video storage options: convenience vs. cost per terabyte (TB)

A terabyte (TB) is 1,024 gigabytes (GB), or about 1,550 hours' worth of video data.

Storage Type	Convenience	Cost
Online	Immediate	\$2,000 / TB
Near Online	Automated retrieval Data	\$1,000 / TB
Offline	Manual retrieval of data	\$300 / TB

Thinking ahead: not just for interviews

The main purpose of a Video Interview Solution is implicit in the name. But once an investment is made in managing video assets online, a police department can leverage this investment to reap the benefits of an entire criminal justice solutions suite.

This accommodates additional police video that has the potential of becoming evidence, such as in-car and general



Making the Case for Recording Digital Interviews

surveillance video, surveillance cameras, text documents, scanned photographs, and audio from 911 calls. Detectives can consolidate evidence for a case and share it with DAs, who can present evidence in court via laptop computer.

Conclusion: a cost-effective solution whose time has come

Police departments in large cities such as Toronto, Chicago and Washington, D.C., as well as hundreds of mid-size and small cities nationwide, have proven that today's Video Interview Solutions are beneficial and affordable law enforcement tools.

This white paper has been authored by MediaSolv, provider of turnkey, end-to-end video interview solutions designed for the criminal justice system.

***For more information call 571-748-5100 x102,
email sales@mediasolvcorp.com, or visit www.mediasolvcorp.com.***