

## FTR INTERROGATOR CASE STUDY

## CORNWALL COMMUNITY POLICE SERVICE



## Business Situation

The Cornwall police service needed to replace its outdated system and sought a new solution to use during the questioning of suspects and the interview of victims and witnesses.

## Solution

The police service partnered with Acrodex Inc., a large Canadian full spectrum, enterprise-wide technology solutions provider, to implement the FTR Interrogator 4.1 — a complete digital interview room solution that enables investigators to capture, playback, annotate, save and manage audio/video recordings of custodial interrogations and interviews.

## Cornwall Community Police Service

The Cornwall police service is comprised of 88 law enforcement officers, 45 civilians including special constables, and is constantly adapting to give the citizens of Cornwall the quality of policing they deserve. The service's use of advanced tools and equipment, combined with an experienced and professional team, has contributed towards a significant clearance rate and efficiency.

For more than 220 years, the Cornwall Community Police Service has proudly worked in partnership with residents of Cornwall, Ontario. Up until recently, the police service was using VHS recorders to capture interviews in their interview/interrogation rooms. While this method was a great way to record both audio and video together, and copies of each tape could be made for police officers and legal teams, challenges arose when only specific segments were needed and when police officers would go back to retrieve the tape, only to find that the recording was poor in quality.

According to Norm Boucher, Information Systems Manager, Cornwall Community Police Service, creating copies of the VHS tapes or copying only segments of the interviews became a time-consuming task, particularly when an interview occurred months before. Law enforcement officers were forced to rummage through hours of coverage to find the exact section they needed.

"Typically, a single police officer would conduct the interview and as a result, a single tape would be produced," said Boucher. "The challenges occurred when a partner wanted to view the interview and then had to go find the officer or search through the storage room to retrieve the tape."

Storing these interview/interrogation tapes also became a major concern. "We went through approximately 700 VHS tapes a year and because of record retention guidelines, we were required to store these tapes for a lengthy period of time," explained Boucher. "The VHS tapes were filling up our archives room at an enormous rate. The room was literally busting at the seams."

## Results

The police service partnered with Acrodex Inc., a large Canadian full

spectrum, enterprise-wide technology solutions provider, to implement the FTR Interrogator 4.1 - a complete digital interview room solution that enables investigators to capture, playback, annotate, save and manage audio/video recordings of custodial interrogations and interviews. As a result, the police service is experiencing cost-savings, increased reliability, and a more streamlined process when interviewing suspects. Officers have saved hours of time trying to find the right segments and giving them the security that critical interviews/interrogations are being recorded with outstanding quality.

Boucher had reviewed various digital alternatives – including Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) – but each option consisted of multiple pieces, each with a single potential point of failure. If one component broke, the entire system could potentially go down. “The appeal of Acrodex’s FTR Interrogator was that it was made entirely of two main parts connected to the computer,” said Boucher. “Because we had disk images of the system on our computer, we would never have to ship the system back to the supplier if anything occurred. We could literally be back up and running within two hours.” In November 2006, Acrodex met with police officials to

demonstrate the audio/visual digital recorder and content management solution. Upon inspection, the service became extremely excited as the FTR Interrogator 4.1 met all their comprehensive criteria – cost effective, easy to use and minimal user training and set-up. The last element is particularly important in an environment like a police station where staff cannot be easily taken off their daily duties in order to learn new technologies or software. After meeting with Acrodex, Norm Boucher and his team came to the conclusion that the digital technology would easily meet the police service’s functional and business goals. “One of the key benefits of this system is that it’s very user-friendly and relatively turnkey,” said Peter Owsiany, General Manager, Acrodex Inc. “As an IT solution partner, we look at customer pain points and then propose the best solutions available for them on the market.” Owsiany said, “Instead of having to wait for the recording session to end, Cornwall police officers can now review the sessions in real-time, allowing them to take their own notes and later log these notes onto the system for

everyone to view. This is a huge timesaver for the force.”

With the FTR Interrogator 4.1, officers can view the interviews from their own computers in real-time, freeing them up to do other work while listening in on a session and providing additional safety for the officers in the room.

“Even if they are doing other work, officers can view the interview from a small window on their desktop. Should anything occur in the interview room – a suspect becoming hostile or violent for example, other officers are instantly aware and can quickly provide assistance,” said Boucher.

#### *Cost Savings*

When searching for a digital solution, the service was looking for a technology that would resolve their challenges cost effectively. With consumers turning to alternative video formats such as DVDs, the police service was finding that VHS tapes were becoming harder to find and with limited supply, also came an increase in price.

“As the VHS tape is now almost an archaic format, we were finding it difficult to obtain the bulk amount of tapes we required. They were also costing us close to two dollars per tape – which is twice the price of a DVD or CD,” explains Boucher. “In addition, warranty was a big consideration for us and the maintenance and service agreement that Acrodex offered

was much more cost effective than purchasing an extended warranty from a DVR supplier.”

The Cornwall Police IT Division found the FTR Interrogator 4.1 so easy to set-up, that Acrodex was able to walk them through the entire implementation on the telephone. Once the set-up was complete, Cornwall Police IT staff was able to directly train the rest of the service on how to use the system with a ten minute demonstration. “The FTR Interrogator 4.1 can’t be any easier for the end user,” explains Boucher. “There’s a red button – it starts the system and it stops the system. That’s pretty much all the officers needed to do.” The product is a direct replacement for VHS and Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) and can be implemented easily, without disrupting established procedures. The FTR Interrogator was first tested alongside the VHS system in an actual interview.

“Two weeks into the pilot, we had an interview that lasted eight hours. With the old solution, we would have to stop the interview to change tapes as one VHS tape couldn’t run the entire time,” said Boucher.

“With the FTR Interrogator 4.1, there was no need to stop the interview and the system seamlessly captured the entire interview. This example convinced me that we could now remove the VHS system entirely from the room.”

Since the pilot program, the FTR Interrogator has been placed in two of the three interview rooms with future plans to set the system up in the third.

#### *Streamlined Processes & Increased Reliability*

Since the implementation, Cornwall Police

Officers have been extremely impressed by the simplicity and effectiveness of the system. The FTR Interrogator 4.1 has helped to streamline processes within the service significantly.

“One of the key benefits of the FTR Interrogator 4.1 is the ability for officers to take notes directly onto the video,” said Boucher. “They can mark a specific point in which a suspect purges themselves or confesses to a crime, so they can easily find the segment again at a later date or forward it on to others. This has saved the officers a significant amount of time searching through tapes.”

Even while stored in a secured room, VHS tapes still run the risk of being exposed to heat or a magnetic field that could compromise the quality of the video. By running the video entirely through a network-based digital environment, officers could be more confident that critical interviews/interrogations were being recorded and saved. Officers had also found that with the VHS tapes, the audio was often difficult to hear when the tape was played back. Boucher has received

feedback from many of the officers that the sound quality from the FTR Interrogator 4.1 is significantly better than the original technology.

#### *Acrodex and Cornwall Community Police Service – a great partnership*

Overall, the Cornwall Community Police have been pleased with their new systems and the support they have received from Acrodex. The Cornwall Community Police Service has been using the FTR Interrogator 4.1 for over five months and are very pleased with the results. “Transitioning from the existing VHS system to FTR’s digital solution has been hassle-free, with no technical difficulties and the learning curve for our staff was minimal,” said Boucher. “From the beginning, Acrodex listened to our challenges and came to us with a solution that worked best for our needs,” said Boucher “They have worked closely with us every step of the way to ensure that we are getting the most value from our investment. This option was definitely a cost effective solution. It would have cost us more than twice the amount if we went to a DVR option.” According to Boucher, for the Cornwall Community Police Service, the FTR Interrogator 4.1 “has been an absolute lifesaver.”