

Project Profile

Infinity Wide Area Network Secures Hutchinson Technology Facilities



*“With *Infinity*'s flexibility, the system is what you make of it.”*

—Ron McKinnon
Corporate Manager
of Security,
Hutchinson Technology,
Inc.

What started as a risk-taking collaboration in 1965 between two young entrepreneurs, with a chicken coop in Hutchinson, Minnesota as their company's first manufacturing facility, has grown into an international company that now manufactures approximately 70% of the world's supply of suspension assemblies. (Suspension assemblies are the precise metal springs that hold the recording heads at microscopic distances above the disks in computer disk drives.) Today Hutchinson Technology, Inc. (HTI) employs over 7,000 people in offices and manufacturing facilities worldwide. Hutchinson's corporate offices and a manufacturing plant are located in Hutchinson, Minnesota (where the chicken coop still stands), with additional manufacturing facilities in Plymouth, Minnesota; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The company also has business offices in China, Singapore, and the Netherlands. Combined total square footage of all sites is 1.8 million (167,220m²).

When Ron McKinnon, Hutchinson's Corporate Manager of Security, began working at the company in 1997, the existing security management system and its accompany proprietary photo imaging system were both proving to be extremely unreliable. Modems were the primary method of communication between HTI's sites. Software and communication failures and the resulting loss in employee productivity were key problems. The many software fixes necessary were expensive. The Wiegand access cards used with the system also proved expensive and were prone to breakage. In fact, McKinnon estimates the cards were costing the company \$110,000 annually in material cost alone to replace broken cards and issue new ones. In addition, the existing system did not support the bar code technology needed for certain applications.

McKinnon, who was already sold on Andover *Infinity* based on his successful experience with the system at his previous job, put together a cost benefit analysis resulting in a one-year payback and proposed an Andover security system to the executive staff. Key focus points were *Infinity*'s software reliability, use of the company's existing network for communications between sites, an open architecture that allows for software customization, support for multiple card formats, including bar code, and a 90% reduction in material costs with a change-over to proximity cards.

McKinnon's past experience with the *Infinity* system was a definite selling point for the company executives. Transition to the Andover security system began in February 1998 and was completed in May. Andover Representative, *VideoTronix, Inc.*, Burnsville, Minnesota, was responsible for the design, engineering, installation, and implementation of the system.

HTI is using *Infinity* at all U.S. sites. Access control for 294 doors, including perimeter, office, and classified areas is accomplished using six *Eclipse* network controllers and 44 ACX access controllers over a wide area Ethernet TCP/IP network. SX 8000 front-end workstations at the Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin sites share information over T1 lines. Currently, Hutchinson relies on a stand-alone CCTV system at each site, but McKinnon says that a company-wide Kalatel camera system integrated to *Infinity* is planned.

Infinity's flexibility has provided HTI numerous opportunities to customize the system to meet each department's unique needs. *Infinity*'s user-friendly interface and single database allows his staff to easily add doors and customize access distribution with a click of the mouse. And because *Infinity* bridges onto the company's mainframe Token Ring network, Hutchinson's IT Department can download information to *Infinity* and vice versa, thus expanding the company's networking options even more. *Infinity* can also produce custom reports within minutes for the HR Department to assist them in investigating excessive employee tardiness, breaks, or to determine unauthorized access to restricted areas. In addition, *Infinity*'s ability to support multiple card technologies allows designated employees to use a bar code imprinted on their proximity cards to control inventory in company tooling cribs. "With *Infinity*'s flexibility," states McKinnon, "the system *is* what you make of it."

An *EPISUITE*™ system, fully compatible with *Infinity*'s SX 8000 front-end software, provides HTI's security staff with an integrated card access/photo ID badging system. "With the previous photo imaging system," states McKinnon, "it took us 3-4 minutes just to *print* each badge. Adding in the system malfunctions—we would spend an entire day issuing badges to 50 new employees. With *EPISUITE*, we can print a badge now in 18 seconds!"

Feedback from HTI employees on the new security system had been extremely positive. According to McKinnon, "Whenever we have questions or concerns about the system, Andover addresses them in a timely manner—they're definitely on top of things."

"*Infinity*'s power, flexibility, performance, and reliability were key to the success of this project," states Alan Lapinsky, Senior Account Executive of *VideoTronix*'s Security Systems Division. "When retrofitting a large existing system, there is little room for error. The conversion went smoothly with few difficulties."

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PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

Project Type:

Security

Project Name:

Hutchinson Technology, Inc.

Location:

Hutchinson, MN,
Plymouth, MN,
Sioux Falls, SD,
Eau Claire, WI

Market Segment:

Manufacturing

Number of Buildings:

10

Total Area:

1.8 million sq. ft. (167,220m²)

Infinity Equipment Installed:

6 - *Eclipse* CX 9400
network controllers
3 - SX 8000 workstations
44 - ACX 780s
1 - ACX 700

Network:

WAN; Ethernet TCP/IP

System Running on Existing

Network:

Yes

Applications:

Access control
Intrusion detection
CCTV monitoring and control
(planned)
EPISUITE™ photo imaging
(3 workstations)

Number of Controlled Doors:

280

Number of Cardholders:

9200

Andover Controls Representative:

VideoTronix, Inc.