

# Creative Financing

WHEN AN INDIANA POLICE DEPARTMENT NEEDED A TOOL FOR ANALYZING VIDEO SURVEILLANCE FILES, IT CHOSE THE OCEAN SYSTEMS SOLUTION. THEN IT TURNED TO LOCAL RETAILERS AND BANKERS FOR FUNDING.

DAVID GRIFFITH

**L**AST YEAR the Fort Wayne (Ind.) Police Department had a problem with its evidence analysis. It had plenty of video of recent crimes, including a rash of bank and credit union robberies, but the video was useless.

"It all looked fantastic at the scenes, but when we got the evidence downloaded, we couldn't view it because we didn't have the proper player or the proper Codec," Det. John Helmsing says. "And even if we could view it, often times because of compression, it would look much poorer than it did in the native environment."

One of the department's deputy chiefs became aware of all the problems that the major crime investigators were having with digital evidence. That chief asked Helmsing to move over to the digital forensics unit and search for solutions. One of Helmsing's first priorities was finding a better way to handle video evidence.

After conducting research, Helmsing decided that what the Fort Wayne PD needed was the video capture and analysis tools from Ocean Systems. "What I really liked about Ocean Systems is that it's in use at more than 2,000 agencies and has been tested in court many times, so if we got Ocean Systems I knew we wouldn't be reinventing the wheel," Helmsing says.

All that remained was to find the funds to buy the Ocean Systems solution.

Helmsing quickly learned that the department didn't have the funds needed.

So Helmsing sought and received approval from his superiors to approach local business users of surveillance video and ask them for donations for the Ocean Systems' equipment. "Banks and credit unions are big users of surveillance video so we started with them," Helmsing says.

Last spring Helmsing sent correspondence to the Bank Fraud Network and the Northeast Indiana Credit Union Association detailing why the Fort Wayne PD needed the forensic video tools. Included with the explanation of need were links to Ocean Systems' videos on YouTube that showed how the technology



works. Helmsing found the bankers very receptive. So he expanded his contact list to include Walmart, Kroger Corp., and Meyers stores.

Helmsing's outreach program was staggeringly successful. The retailers, bankers, and community associations donated \$9,000 for the forensic video tools. The remaining \$6,000 was covered by a Byrne

Justice Assistance Grant (JAG). Consequently, no local tax money was used to purchase the Ocean Systems solution.

Once the Ocean Systems solution was purchased, Helmsing and another detective in the digital forensics unit became the Fort Wayne PD's experts in how to use the equipment and the software. They were trained on the Ocean Systems solution by the Law Enforcement & Emergency Services Video Association (LEVA), which has 20 Ocean Systems Stations in its lab.

They returned from that training and taught their fellow detectives how to perform video capture in the field using Ocean Systems' Omnivore. Omnivore is a proprietary USB-based device with Ocean Systems' forensic video and image capture software built into it. "It's very user friendly and it captures a copy of the video at an uncompressed, 1:1 ratio," Helmsing says.

Helmsing says Omnivore allows detectives in the field to capture the raw, higher-quality video, which can then be

exported to various forensically accepted formats and turned over to the digital forensics unit for further analysis using the Ocean Systems equipment and software.

"If you get a decent image of a suspect or suspect vehicle, many times you have angle issues or poor lighting," Helmsing says. "What the analysis and clarification tools do is allow us to take the information that's there and clean it up and improve the lighting."

Helmsing says he has been extremely pleased with the capabilities of Fort Wayne PD's new Ocean Systems equipment and tools. "It performs as advertised," he says. "It's done a really great job in helping us develop information for our investigators." 

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(Top to bottom) Det. John Helmsing works on a video. Fort Wayne detectives upload a file. Screen shot from Ocean Systems' solution.