

Photogenic

Plumrose uses remote video auditing to boost product safety and employee performance.

There's some fascinating psychology at work behind the use of Arrowsight's remote Video Auditing Service at the Plumrose Deli Meats and Bacon Processing Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Deployed to provide a supplemental layer of protection in Plumrose's relentless pursuit of food safety, the service promotes compliance with HACCP regulations and other prescribed policies by visually confirming that workers repeatedly adhere to critical quality assurance practices—whether checking product temperature at a specified time or closing the lunchroom door.

But instead of feeling watched over by a Big-Brother-like presence, employees at the high-efficiency plant, which has the capability of making 175 million pounds of product a year, are glad to see the system in place.

"We contracted for this service to observe people doing the right thing, not to catch them doing something wrong," says Mike Rozzano, general manager at Plumrose USA, which has its corporate headquarters in East Brunswick, N.J. "It gives us the assurance that we're doing what we are supposed to be doing on a continual basis."

According to Arrowsight founder and president Adam Aronson, principles of industrial psychology indicate that observation data are more effective as a tool for encouragement than as a mechanism for critique. Successful

monitoring programs drive a message of positive reinforcement.

"In seven years of working with various industries, I've found that when you use this powerful information about exactly what went wrong to tell people they did a bad job, it backfires," says Aronson. "But when you use it as a management

tool to identify people who do the right thing, it lowers turnover, boosts morale, and improves productivity.

"Workers know they are being watched to document the great stuff they are supposed to be doing," he continues. "It's important for staff in any environment to associate the camera with a reward system, not a penalty," he adds, noting that Arrowsight installations typically see compliance scores go up—and stay that way.

At Council Bluffs, the monitoring system starts with a series of video cameras installed at roughly 30 stations—most

of them critical control points—in the 100,000-square-foot plant. Operating 24/7 and recording all activity in their field of vision, the cameras use Arrowsight's remote video technology to collect data on employee performance relating to plant security and food-safety regulations. The data are then fed to and analyzed by a web-based auditing site, which delivers daily report cards on the activity to Plumrose management via the Internet.

The e-mailed score cards include visual documentation of the events uncovered by the auditing service in a range of requested circumstances, from proper inspection procedures to employee adherence to industry GMPs such as wearing hairnets and gloves.

The service, available from ADT Security Systems as ADT Select Vision powered by Arrowsight, overcomes the problems associated with traditional video monitoring, where someone must sit and watch every second of what the cameras are recording, with the result that it takes a full two hours to view a two-hour production segment—whether in real-time or on tape delay. However, it's difficult to maintain a high level of attention over such an extended period, and most experts agree that after a while observers can overlook important events.

In contrast, Arrowsight's solution relies on assured quality level (AQL) methods to monitor the video. "Someone within Arrowsight is viewing the tapes on an AQL basis. We list the criteria, and they tell us if they are being met or not. Then that audit is certified by an outside QC firm, so we have checks and double-checks all the way through the process," Rozzano explains.

A key part of the system is the push-button mechanism on each camera, which employees trigger just before performing a specific function to signal that a prescribed action is about to take place. This creates a tracking mechanism that makes it easy for auditors to document that the events have indeed occurred and when.

Enlisting worker buy-in at Council Bluffs has never been an issue. "I haven't heard one negative comment from an employee," the Plumrose manager says. "When we explain what the system is for and why, they all embrace it."

More often than not, any discussion about the preceding week's score card is positive and favorable. Remarks Rozzano: "Our hope is for 100-percent compliance. We like to convey the idea that we were perfect. Employees are proud of the job they are doing and get a pat on the shoulder every week, instead of worrying about the negative side."

As one of the largest producers of premium sliced meats, bacon, and deli hams in the U.S., Plumrose seeks to carve out a leadership position on food safety and security issues.



"The primary reason we are using this technology is because we want to become a model for safety in this industry," states Rozzano. "This system introduces another level of protection, affording us the opportunity to check the checker."

Attaining this kind of gold standard plays well with customers, who welcome the transparency of the service's third-party, arms-length audit. It can also translate into significant profit: for example, by immediately identifying and curtailing incorrect practices or breakdowns that might otherwise continue over a long period of time.

"Think of a pickle-making application that is monitored to confirm all the ingredients have been added in the right order

and quantities," says Aronson. "That could save a plant from having to rework 100,000 pounds of meat later in the day."

Rozzano also appreciates the productivity benefit of being able to view plant operations from a remote location, eliminating the time and expense of travel. And although the system was just installed at the end of 2004, he is already looking toward the future.

"There are some natural applications for the service in food security," he says. "Food safety and security are so important today. They are at the top of mind all the time."

Detailed information about the service is available on the internet at www.arrowsight.com and www.adtselectvision.com. **MP**