

INTERVIEW

Small and Sophisticated

Basler AG Is Becoming Established in the Security Technology Market



Eighteen months ago, Basler AG took the bold step of entering the video surveillance market with newly developed IP cameras. This company, which already has more than 20 years of experience in the field of industrial image processing, has already caused a sensation at the ifsec 2008. Because of the extremely compact design, at first sight Basler cameras are easy to overlook, however the company itself has already made a lasting impression after only a few months. At the company headquarters and production site in Ahrensburg, Heiko Baumgartner spoke to Hardy Mehl, IP Business Director of Basler AG about further development of the products, the marketing strategy and plans for the future.

GIT SECURITY: It was certainly a great step from industrial image processing to supplying video solutions for the security sector. What experiences have you had in the past months?

H. Mehl: We are very satisfied with our start, and in spite of the global economic crisis, we are now where we wanted to be at the present time.

From the point of view of the company, entry into this market was a step in the right direction, because it makes us less dependant on the economic cycles of the industrial image processing sector. Our approach was, and is, to offer customers the benefits of network technology with IP cameras, without making compromises with regard to image quality and reliability in comparison with analog cameras. For this we use our long experience in the development and production of digital cameras and closely involve our customers in the development of our products. We are very pleased to see that our products are becoming established on the market. This motivates our employees, who have to keep pace with a rapidly moving market and have to resolve demanding problems. It is very exciting to see that almost every day we receive suggestions from the work with our customers, which we integrate into the development of future products. We are very confident that in the coming months and quarters, even more customers will become enthusiastic about our products and will strengthen our market position.

Which sectors are you concentrating on?

H. Mehl: The field of application of our cameras is not restricted to particular sectors. Many vertical markets require reliable IP products with high image quality and light sensitivity. However, we have noticed an especially high demand in the bank sector, where in addition to reliability and image quality the discrete design of our cameras offers advantages. As well as this, in the field of traffic surveillance, where we already have well developed relationships with customers, our high resolution IP cameras are in great demand due to the light-sensitive CCD sensors and special product features such as multiple streaming and trigger functionalities. Logistics companies are also enthusiastic about our products. In this field, high image quality and a high dynamic range is also very important.

How far have you progressed with the development of the sales structure?

H. Mehl: Internally, we have recently reinforced our sales department for Europe and the Near East. We only sell via distributors and are



further expanding our sales network. With our sales partners we pay attention to quality, because the advisory service must be competent in order to emphasise the added value of our products to enquirers. In individual countries we prefer to cooperate with a few, very active and especially competent partners. In the DACH region and the Benelux countries we have made good progress with regard to our sales structure and we are also expanding in Southern Europe, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Beyond the EMEA market, since March we have been actively selling our products in Asia. As in the USA, we use the infrastructure and branches of the Basler AG from the field of industrial image processing.

As well as the functionality of your cameras you continually emphasise the high manufacturing quality of Basler products. How do you ensure this?

H. Mehl: Throughout the world, the Basler brand stands for excellent image quality. As we have our roots in industrial image processing and not in the manufacture of consumer products, our security products must also meet the very highest demands. In industrial image processing our cameras are not only used for the simple monitoring of processes, but rather are used as precision measuring instruments. The production of IP video cameras is also orientated to these quality standards. In order to achieve this in a cost-effective way, we use several state-of-the-art automatic testing processes in our production. We

test all cameras with a special camera testing tool called CTT+ (Camera Test Tool). CTT+ ensures that each camera which leaves our factory is optically calibrated and has been subjected to a final function test. In this way, customers can be confident that cameras from different deliveries have identical characteristics.



You also go your own way with sensors?

H. Mehl: Yes, for the current and future products we deliberately rely on high sensitivity CCD sensors with progressive read-out methods to prevent blurring due to movement. The image quality essentially depends on the quality of the sensors. However, for a good depth of field, these must be precisely positioned in the camera. With our patented CSAT technology (Camera Sensor Alignment Tool) the focus of each individual Basler camera is precisely measured, adjusted and fixed. This guarantees that each camera which leaves our factory has the same consistent quality.

What are your plans to round off the range?

H. Mehl: We now supply cameras from VGA resolution up to 2 megapixels, and in spring we extended our network cameras to include a day/night functionality and provided all our models with an optional automatically swivelling infra-



◀ The new Basler IP Fixed Dome Camera

red cut filter. Brand-new for 2010 are our first dome cameras. We start with two outdoor proof models with built-in heater and fan in a vandal resistant aluminium housing. Like with our other cameras, the outstanding image quality of this dome cameras comes from highly sensitive CCD sensors. Both versions are available with dual-encoding with MJPEG, MPEG4 or H.264 and multi-streaming functionalities for multiple customized streams. As well as this, we are continuously working on the further development of the sensors and software. Customers always receive a free upgrade of each software version.

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