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Welcome back
Viviane Brokerhof

public services

Digital Signage Helps

Dutch Police Force

To Catch Suspects

12 Jun 2007



Long arm of the law: LCD and plasma screens are located in police stations throughout the Groningen region

A regional police force in the Dutch city of Groningen has implemented a new system to broadcast bulletins to officers via digital-signage screens, PC screen-savers and PDAs. The system, provided by Netpresenter and also used by other forces including Merseyside Police in England and the Toronto Police Service, has resulted in seven arrests since its installation.

The network displays pictures, video material and information on wanted and missing persons on some 23 LCD and plasma screens, on the force's Intranet and on officers' PDAs. The screens, which include 26-inch Sharp and 32-inch NEC models, are located in stations throughout the Groningen region but situated in areas only accessible to officers – for example canteens, office spaces and meeting areas.

In the future, the system will also show bulletins on PCs as screen-savers or, with urgent information, in pop-up windows. The display uses colour codes so officers can immediately see what type of message is being sent and what priority it has. The messages sent to PDAs also employ GPS to offer location-specific information.

Content is added via *Netpresenter Editor* content-management software. Usually, the network is updated every 15 minutes, but in case of emergency it can be updated in real time.

Although Groningen's police force funded the project, it also received a subsidy of €50,000 (\$66,626) from the Dutch government, as the programme is seen as a pilot that other forces might emulate in the future.

Seven arrests

The rollout was completed after a trial period using just seven screens to display bulletins. During that period seven suspects were recognised by officers viewing the system and arrested.

“The strength of the solution is recurrence of the message,” said Roland Hiemstra, project leader of digital media at Regional Police Service Groningen. “Faces and names of suspects are remembered better because the officers see the information multiple times. Officers often tell me they were able to make an arrest because they recognised a face or name.”

Frank Hoen, CEO of Netpresenter, said that some police forces are overwhelmed by the amount of information that arrives at them through various media. “Many detectives were struggling with the overload of information from Intranet, briefings and email. Because important information such as APBs [all points bulletins] was sometimes overlooked, the [Groningen] police service searched for a system to get the right information to the right people at the right time.”

With its new system, Groningen follows in the footsteps of police services in Liverpool and Toronto, where the same technology is used to broadcast messages that include information on terrorist threats and missing children to all PC and in-car workstations. Both police forces have been licensed to use the software on PCs and large screens.

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