

News

Twin City Hardware shifts from Lock-and-Key to Vanderbilt's ACT365



Twin City Hardware (TCH) has more than 130 years of experience providing opening and access solutions for commercial, architectural and residential construction projects throughout the United States. It began as an old-time hardware store in 1883, originally known as Twin City Hardware & Heating Co. In 1954, it was bought by George Boomer, Sr., who transformed the business into an opening and access solutions hardware supplier for many commercial jobs around the Twin Cities, including the State Highway Building and the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. Over the past half-century, TCH has continued along a robust growth path, and is now one of the premier commercial technology and service suppliers in the country.

TCH, a Vanderbilt integrator partner, works closely with end user organizations on security

enhancement projects. It focuses on providing access control solutions for a variety of customers - from small businesses with a handful of doors/readers, to enterprise organizations, including higher education and healthcare campuses.

The Challenge

The company's New Hope, Minn., location has a large inventory and many staff who work varying shifts throughout the day. The facility was originally secured with mechanical hardware and keys. A once-trusted system, traditional lock-and-key technologies can be less secure than newer door solutions, especially in the instance that a key is lost or access to the facility needs to be restricted. "Key control is always the hardest part of access control," said Dan Siroin, Integrated Access Systems Manager, TCH.

TCH was unable to know who was entering and exiting the building at any given time, which led to security, building management and privacy concerns. The company decided to evaluate how it could best monitor access to and from the facility. "It's important in the instance of an alarm that we know who is present in the building," he said. "With mechanical keys and locks, we didn't have critical information."

The Solution

TCH was introduced to the Vanderbilt ACT365 cloud-based access control and video management solution when the company introduced it to partners earlier this year. It's a system that added additional value to Vanderbilt's core technology offerings and came with its strategic acquisition of Access Control Technologies (ACT). TCH was interested in how the ACT365 solution could be a strong addition to its product and services suite, and decided to pilot ACT365 at one of its administrative offices.

Working closely with Vanderbilt, TCH deployed a focused solution consisting of two readers and two cameras in the facility to test the product's capabilities. Administrators can provide pin codes, access fobs and cards to employees as credentials to access the facility. These credentials can be easily enabled or disabled remotely if required.

"Cloud-based systems are a unique niche fit for small- to medium-sized customers that have little to no network infrastructure or staff to incorporate a 'use anywhere' access control system," Siroin said. "We believe that there is a great opportunity to deploy this to our customers, but we wanted to run the solution through our stringent testing process."

The scalable ACT365 cloud-based solution is designed to allow users to control and administer access control capabilities from anywhere, at any time and on any device. Each access control unit consists of a single-door IP controller and connects to Web-based software hosted in Microsoft Azure. Users can leverage either a Web-based device or a mobile application to quickly update or remove user permissions, view cameras associated with an access control event or open a door. Overall, it allows for simplistic management of multiple sites and users from a unified, friendly interface, and delivers new levels of situational awareness for users monitoring access privileges.

“The mobile application provides the freedom to conduct most functions wherever you are,” Siroin said. “The system is very easy to use as well. Within a short period of time, I was able to manage access through both the mobile and Web portal with no training or support.”

The Results

The ACT365 solution allows TCH to access a regular audit trail of who is in the building by monitoring card reader activity. ACT365 produces diagnostic reports on door status and can investigate situations such as door forced, door ajar and break glass activation either locally or remotely, allowing users to be alerted in the event of an incident. This results in more control for security directors to address situations as they occur in real-time instead of retrospectively.

If an incident should arise in the TCH administrative offices, ACT365 links events at doors through video footage so officials can quickly identify and react efficiently and effectively, with all the necessary information. In the event of a fire or other emergency, ACT365 automatically unlocks all doors, allowing employees and visitors to reach safety. Muster reporting using the ACT365 platform provides officials with a real-time list of everyone in the building, and if someone is missing, users can check cameras and get in contact with them to ensure they are safe. Live and recorded video can be viewed remotely and footage can be used in evidence.

“The ACT365 solution is ideal for the kind of environment where high turnover is prevalent, as it eliminates the need to re-key doors based on employees coming and going regularly,” Siroin said. “We also now have the ability to monitor situations as they occur, which means our employees can feel safer knowing they'll be alerted immediately in the event of an emergency.”

Using a cloud-based system allows TCH the simplicity of straightforward access management without the need to engage an internal network person or adding more pieces to an existing network. The cloud benefits businesses like TCH that have limited resources to focus on maintenance of in-house servers and hardware, shifting it to a managed solution that allows automatic upgrades to software.

“ACT365 is a simple and easy-to-use access control and video management system that will meet the needs of the small- to medium-sized business clientele that we serve,” Siroin said.

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