

Protecting the world's most valuable art, in the heart of NYC

BY LEISCHEN STELTER

DALLAS—As if protecting some of the most valuable artwork in the world wasn't enough pressure, mix in eight floors of multi-use rooms in the heart of the biggest city in the country.

When Steve Wrightson, vice president and director of security, Americas for Christie's Auction House, sat down with Security Director News at ASIS International in Dallas on Oct. 13, he talked about the various challenges the world's leading art business deals with on a regular basis. Protecting the headquarters, located at Rockefeller Center, creates a security challenge in and of itself. "Architecturally, it is a bit of a challenge to secure all these different spaces at once and that's where technology and staffing comes into play," said Wrightson. This location includes warehouse space, 10 galleries, two sales rooms, a number of viewing rooms, as well as administrative offices. The company also conducts private tours of artwork for high-end buyers.

The biggest challenge for Christie's Auc-



tion House was the lack of integration of its security systems. "We needed to improve visibility and improve response times and overall improve the integration between access control and video," said Wrightson. The company worked with its primary integrator, Diebold, to tie together those two systems and enhance how its operators received alarms and information happening in the facility. "We wanted our operator to hear, see and read exactly what's going on so we can properly respond," he said. And the results have been good, he said, actually, better than expected. "Our response to alarms is less than a minute. I was hoping we could get to them down to three or four minutes, so that's a huge advantage," he said.

for the integration. "We wanted to get it right, there was no option for a second chance," he said. But Wrightson said the project is far from over. The company is looking to migrate to an IP-based surveillance system and Wrightson said he now feels good about making the switch. "We have analog cameras hardwired back to a DVR, that was an ideal solution a few years ago, but now the technology has caught up to the point that we feel comfortable transitioning over from analog to IP," he said. He is currently in the process of evaluating megapixel cameras and forecasted that they will make the switch sometime early next year.

And while moving to IP will have a number of advantages, Wrightson said he is more excited about the maturation of RFID for asset tracking purposes. "It's something we looked at a while back, but the technology and pricing really wasn't up to what we needed," he said. "It's something that's exciting for Christie's but also the security field in general." SDN

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But it's not all about securing valuable artwork, Wrightson emphasized. "If a water detection alarm goes off in one of our subcellars, to us, that's a huge risk. Security is not just about theft, it's about the overall protection of property."

Christie's was able to integrate its analog surveillance system with its access control system relatively quickly, in less than a month, but it took about three months to design and plan