


**Taking**

# License



Technological advances offer a reliable license plate capturing system that can operate effectively in nearly any condition. These tips and tricks will help you understand the opportunities your company can gain from offering this technology to new and existing customers.

By Jennifer Houser

**A** vehicle was stolen nearly every 26.5 seconds in the United States in 2006, and the odds of a vehicle being stolen in 2005 were one in 207. With an increase in vehicle-related crimes, it is essential to have the ability to capture high-quality license plate images on a 24-hour basis. Having this information is an indispensable tool in capturing thieves and providing a safer, regulated environment.

License plate capture technology expands beyond typical traffic control applications, and offers users an additional — and successful — means of security. This technology could be the hidden gem you need to generate new business and increase your recurring monthly revenue (RMR).

### **Conventional Cameras Don't Do the Trick**

Knowing the inefficiencies of license plate capturing by conventional cameras will help you determine how to approach potential customers with a retrofit or new system installation. Lighting conditions and the speed of vehicles make it nearly impossible for conventional cameras to produce clear and consistent license plate images. Additionally, areas associated with glare, headlights and darkness also become a problem.

Fortunately, dedicated license plate capturing cameras provide the capabilities needed to efficiently track which vehicles are coming and going from a specified location. These cameras can be strategically placed at vehicle access points and in areas prone to vehicle vandalism and

tampering. At the end of the day, license plate images provide a powerful weapon to use against would-be criminals: indisputable evidence in a court of law.

Sidney Sommer, managing director of UCIT Online Security in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, installs license plate capture technology for construction site security.

“We currently use this technology on every one of our sites,” Sommer says. “It is a big reason why we average over one arrest a week. No matter how quick your police response time is, sometimes a criminal is literally ‘gone in 60 seconds.’ Therefore, capturing a license plate is invaluable in our business.”



Overcoming the problems of headlight glare and low lighting, cameras specially designed for license plate capture such as Extreme CCTV's REG<sup>®</sup> (right) are capable of delivering highly resolved images in subzero temperatures.

### Finding the Right Application for Customers

While this technology is often used for traffic management, toll systems and parking, there are many other effective uses for these cameras beyond typical traffic applications. License plate capture can be used for vehicle surveillance and access control into and out of a protective premise such as a gated community, university campus or parking garage. While this technology was once reserved for only high-end applications, it is now available for every level of security.



License plate capture can be used for vehicle surveillance and access control into and out of a gated community, university campus or parking garage. The camera can also be integrated with video analytics to create a license plate recognition system.

“Security is such a competitive industry and this technology will allow you to offer your customers or potential customers a reliable license plate capture solution,” says Sommer.

By integrating this technology with video analytics, customers can implement a license plate *recognition* system. This image processing technology identifies vehicles by “reading” its license plate number and recognizing its identity through its systems database. This information can be used for data collection or for an access control system to allow authorized vehicles to

enter through a secured gate. These units can also be added as a retrofit to existing systems to provide additional security for current customers.

### Installation Tips and Tricks

License plate capture is a growing sector in the security industry now that technology has advanced the ability for these cameras to acquire clear images in nearly any condition. However, several rules still apply when implementing these cameras into a license plate capture system. The

quality of an image is undoubtedly the most important aspect of this system. In order to ensure a pristine image, only use dedicated cameras to capture license plates. By using the camera for dual purposes, such as surveillance and license plate capture, the camera's effectiveness will be compromised as it tries to cover a wider area. As a result, high-resolution images will not be captured.

The camera's position is also essential to its functionality. A clear line of sight is needed to effectively capture a clear license plate image. In order to accomplish this, position the cameras in areas that limit a vehicle's maneuverability (i.e.: at control points or bottleneck areas). The use of barriers or

control gates will prevent the vehicle from reaching high speeds or angling the license plate away from the camera. Do not position the camera too high above the road; the camera's line of site should not exceed a 35° angle.



License plate capture cameras can be used to improve border security and operations. The camera system above provides high-resolution license plate imaging to intelligent software at the Sweden-Finland border.



It is important to use a dedicated camera to capture a clear license plate image. Dual cameras can be used for license plate capture and overall surveillance without compromising the quality of images.

Using infrared (IR) illumination will overcome problems such as glare and poor lighting conditions. These systems filter visible light and use only IR light to provide consistent image capture on a 24-hour basis. Headlights and reflections will no longer hinder the license plate image capturing process.

Lastly, the proper use of compression becomes a key factor in preserving the quality of the image. In order to ensure effective license plate capture, it is important to use a compression level that will retain image resolution. By selecting a compression level that results in a larger file size, you can prevent pixilated, unreadable images and ensure that your customers have sharp, crisp license plates. The plate images serve as irrefutable evidence that dramatically increases the efficiency of police investigations and helps convict criminals.

This value-added technology can create new business opportunities and become an additional source of revenue for your company. With these tips in mind, you can now offer your existing and new customers a reliable and consistent license plate capturing system. ■