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Standing out from the Crowd: iOmniscient wins the Global Security Challenge for Crowded Places

Advanced surveillance technology that can help identify would-be terrorists and criminals hiding in crowds is winning international recognition for Sydney company iOmniscient.

In January the Australian Technology Showcase member won the Global Security Challenge for Crowded Places. Sponsored by BAE Systems, the award recognises the company that brings fresh thinking to the problem of protecting the public from the threat of terrorism in crowded urban environments.
iOmniscient's chief executive officer Dr Rustom Kanga says that many surveillance systems use video cameras to detect activity in mostly empty spaces, but his company has specialised in solving that problem for crowded environments such as train stations, airports, shopping malls and city streets.

Kanga says that analysing crowded scenes is considered to be the hardest task in Artificial Intelligence-based video analysis.

"Our speciality is coping with crowds – recognising people in crowds, recognising behaviour in crowds, and so on," Kanga says. "Our approach has been to focus on doing the difficult things, and that's how we can stand out from our competition in an otherwise very crowded market."

Founded in 2001, iOmniscient has developed a range of software-based detection and identification systems that can operate simultaneously on the same camera, and can detect activities in crowded scenes despite heavy motion and obscuration.

The technology can work with existing closed circuit television (CCTV) systems to detect activity such as left or removed objects, slips and falls, loitering, graffiti, and can even identify individual faces and license plates.
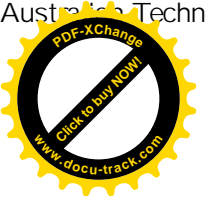
Kanga says it can also detect incidents that are virtually invisible to the human operator, and every system is armed with the ability to minimise false alarms which is a major problem for most CCTV systems.

Over the years the company has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2005 ATS Patron's Award.

iOmniscient's systems have been implemented at airports including Mexico City, Kuala Lumpur and Anatalya in Turkey. It is used on the world's fastest train from Wuhan to Guangzhou in China as well as in railway systems in Chicago, Milan, Rotterdam and Montreal.

Kanga says the energy company BP uses iOmniscient to protect its pipelines and refineries in difficult terrain. It is also used by shopping malls to count people traffic, and by art galleries to prevent theft.

International sales currently account for more than 90 per cent of the

company's revenue with several organisations requiring iOmniscient's products as a mandatory element of their security system.

Kanga says iOmniscient has benefitted from being built without significant venture capital investment, which he says has isolated it from the short-term pressures that can be exerted by external shareholders and allowed it to continue investing through the financial crisis when many of its international competitors were significantly constrained.

While the company is growing rapidly, Kanga says the focus is on maintaining that technological leadership.

"Our focus is on having the world's best technology for automated surveillance and on having very happy customers," he says. "If we can do those two things well, growth and profitability are the natural result."

To find out more about iOmniscient, visit: www.iomniscient.com

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