

VIRGIN TRAINS – A CLEAR VIEW OF CUSTOMER SAFETY

As one of Europe's main arterial rail links, the UK's West Coast Main Line facilitates nearly 20 million passenger journey's each year on Virgin Trains throughout the length and breadth of its 401 mile route from London Euston to Glasgow Central.

Against a backdrop of significant investment in line development over the last ten years, the franchise operator set about improving the safety and security of its customers with a national CCTV upgrade programme for the stations along the route.

As part of its ongoing commitment to improving infrastructure and in line with its franchise agreement, Virgin Trains embarked upon an improvement programme to enhance both the quantity and quality of CCTV across the West Coast Main Line stations. The project adopted the Government guidelines and the British Transport Police Working Code of Practice, with the aim of enabling Virgin Trains to achieve the Secure Stations and Car Parks accreditation upon completion.

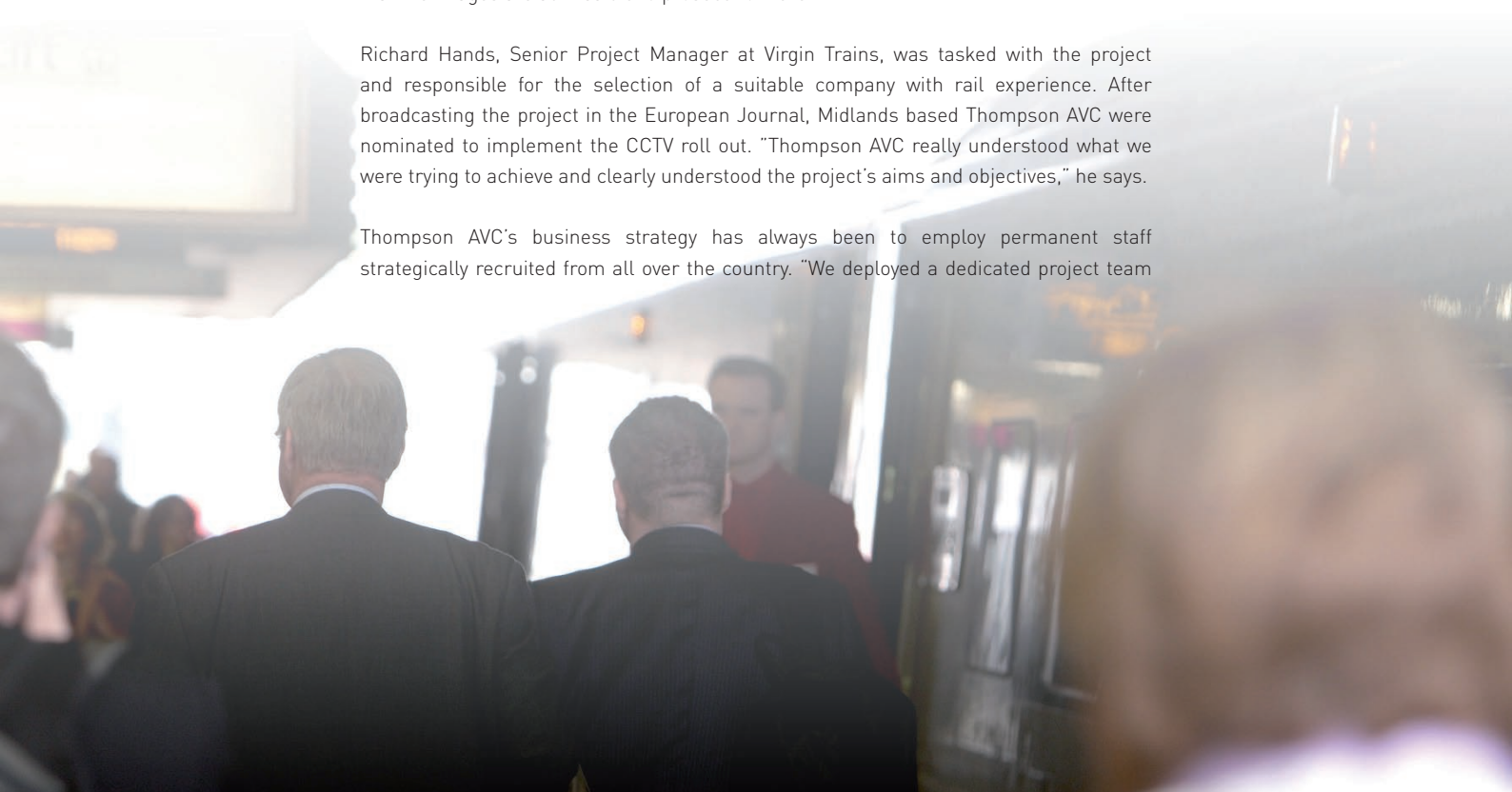
The scope of the project was to improve the safety of the huge number of passengers who use the stations every day, whilst also ensuring that their staff and property are equally well protected.

A clear objective

Virgin Trains had clear and concise operational objectives for the scheme ensuring that they achieved a precise and high quality image, ease of image retrieval, sufficient storage and an easy system to operate for their staff. All of these key component factors ensure that the images are admissible to prosecution level.

Richard Hands, Senior Project Manager at Virgin Trains, was tasked with the project and responsible for the selection of a suitable company with rail experience. After broadcasting the project in the European Journal, Midlands based Thompson AVC were nominated to implement the CCTV roll out. "Thompson AVC really understood what we were trying to achieve and clearly understood the project's aims and objectives," he says.

Thompson AVC's business strategy has always been to employ permanent staff strategically recruited from all over the country. "We deployed a dedicated project team



for the entirety of the project, which consisted of project management, engineering and commercial members. We held regular meetings to ensure that we continued to understand Virgin Trains' requirements and that they knew exactly what were working on, how long it would take and any issues we encountered on the way," says Michael Collins, Business Development Manager of Thompson AVC. "It was our multi-disciplinary approach to this project that enabled the programme to run smoothly, despite the size of the scheme."

The right tools for the job

The majority of the cameras installed across the stations are Pelco Spectre IV domes, complemented by Vista WRD domes and Bosch Dinion box cameras. "We selected the most appropriate technology to fit the operational requirement of each camera," says Mr Collins. "For example, for those areas that had contrasting light levels, such as doorways, we used Wide Dynamic Range cameras like the Bosch Dinion, ensuring that we achieved the level of detail required. Our structured and methodical approach has ensured that we have delivered a very complex project on time but, more importantly, it clearly meets our client's long term aims and objectives".

In all, over 300 cameras have been installed over the duration of the project. "The number of cameras at each station obviously differs depending on the size of the site," says Mr Collins. "Equipment is positioned at entrances and exits as well as along the platforms. This gives us the best combination of overall views and of more focussed shots of specific situations or areas."

Put to the test

The system has successfully met its objectives, providing the stations with an easy-to-use solution that gives extremely sharp, clear images. "The cameras are fantastic, even at full zoom," says Mr Hands. "Some of the stations are very large, but we can track people and zoom in and out of situations as required."



The quality of the CCTV footage was put to the test when a student on his way home was attacked at Wolverhampton station late one night. The assailant pistol-whipped his victim causing a head wound. The footage of the attack was immediately reviewed by the police, who were able to identify the assailant and arrest him within 36 hours. The case went to court and, thanks to the clarity of the images, the attacker was successfully convicted.

A top team

Thompson AVC worked closely with equipment suppliers Norbain to ensure that the installation ran smoothly. "We've been using Norbain for over ten years and work closely with them on projects like this," says Mr Scott Thompson, Managing Director. "They always keep us informed about the latest technology and what's new, which means we can be confident that we are fully informed about the latest market developments."

Mr Hands is very pleased with the work that Thompson AVC has undertaken. "They co-ordinated the installation with the station team and managed to keep disruption to a minimum by taking a flexible approach to the project."

The benefits of the new system are not simply financial, although by upgrading from analogue to digital there will be significant maintenance savings in the future. "The system is an overt reminder to passengers and staff that we are taking measures to ensure their safety in the stations," says Mr Hands. "It's about meeting customer expectations on a day-to-day basis and providing them with a great service."

About Thomposon AVC

Thompson AVC provides a holistic approach for security and fire solutions by handling all the design, installation and support aspects of a project, no matter what the size. They deliver innovative, client-focussed solutions, across a variety of business sectors such as commercial, retail, education, health and law enforcement, and maintain a constant investment in new technology and equipment. With a clear focus on the future, they deliver the most appropriate installations for their client base underpinned by excellent service.

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