



# Face Value

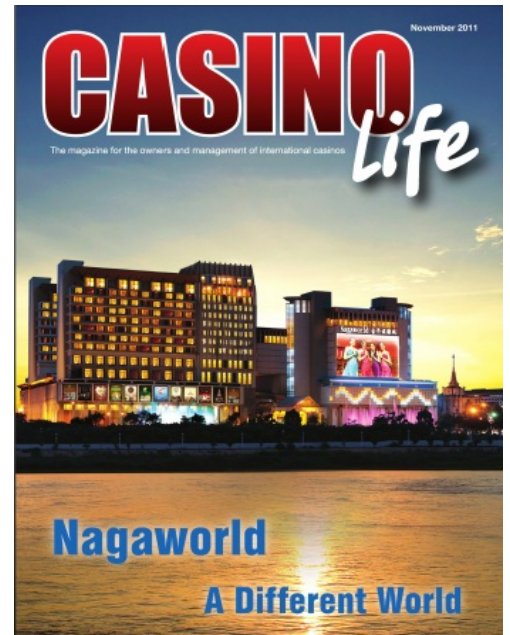
Peter White talks to James Pepin, VP Sales and Marketing at Biometrica Systems LLC

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When did the company get founded and what were the aims and ambitions and have they all been met?

Biometrica Systems was formed in 1998 to bring improved games protection to casinos, specifically starting with software that included face recognition technology. We were acquired in 2002 by Viisage which later became L-1 Identity Solutions. With the recent acquisition of L-1 by Morpho, we are now part of the world's largest biometric company. Our product allows casinos, who each have hundreds or thousands of cameras, to easily and quickly identify casino undesirables or other persons of interest.

What are the key advantages of your organisation's expertise in identity verification for casino operations and how fool proof is it?

Biometrica started as a very small company but was fortunate to license an excellent face recognition engine from a large well known biometrics company. We used the FR engine, designed a very easy-to-use user interface for the casino surveillance and security environments, and then added other modules to create the VisualCasino package.

Our new version 6 of VisualCasino now incorporates a face recognition that is a couple generations more advanced and effective than ever before now that we are part of the leading biometrics technology company.

As for the performance of the FR in the casino environment, it isn't really a question of how fool proof it is. Our parent company has virtually fool proof biometric access products (shall this person get access to the vault, cashier cage, or other private room, etc.?), but our casino clients don't use our VisualCasino system for access control. They mostly need a way to speed identifications of persons of interest and it is not trying to check all the patrons all the time. Surveillance can use any existing camera to zoom to the face of any person that has aroused interest (a large winner, or anyone acting suspiciously, or for a name refusal, or from a call from the pit asking for identification help). The software instantly searches the databases and displays several results starting with the most likely match first. It displays multiple persons because with the typical high angles, variable lighting, and even disguises, it is appropriate to display even multiple people who have multiple facial measurements that are

to some degree a match to the person interest. Even if the real match come up #2 or 3 in the display, the surveillance agent can make that identification in just a few seconds versus many more minutes of reviewing archived photos manually. Saving these precious minutes is how we save casinos a bundle of money. The system is highly effective and the new version 6 has moved that effectiveness up even further. We have come a long way since our first software edition in 1998. Our VisualCasino software is modular which means the casino can select the best combination of modules to fit their particular needs and budgets.

Can you explain your Facial recognition system?

We employ the most advanced facial recognition software available as an additional tool to more efficiently search the Casino Information Database along with any private databases created by the casino customer. It uses the video feed from existing cameras, or from any image files, to instantly search the databases to help identify people that should be addressed before potential losses take place. Another reason it works so well is that our CID Databases are comprised mostly of photos taken from the same angles that the casinos use for the input.

We are also currently beta testing an additional type of continuous face recognition designed for use in certain control areas. It would be appropriate at a riverboats turnstile, or over an ATM or kiosk, or at the top of an escalator.....places where you can maximize the lighting and camera angle and likely expect that the people will be facing in one main direction. The system will pop up a match on a surveillance monitor when it finds a close enough match to warrant more investigation. This should be excellent for use with self-exclusions and other banned lists and our newest FR technologies should produce better results than previous attempts by other suppliers.

I understand you also have a Casino Information Database?

This is our casino undesirables database available by subscription. It includes information and pictures on more than 3,200 individuals, with 7,200+ photos, that have been identified as undesirable such as advantage players and teams, opportunists, manipulators, etc.) The database is instantly searchable based on a broad variety of criteria to enable surveillance personnel to quickly identify patrons who pose a potential financial or security risk for the casino. Our database is updated regularly with new information obtained by our casino identification experts in the field as they work with casino operators, local law enforcement and gaming agencies. There is a growing number of slot cheats, card benders, card switchers, thieves as well as skilled advantage players.

What is your Surveillance Information Network Module?

This special network of 170+ casino surveillance operators allows its members to share individual Alerts wit any or all the SIN casinos about new cheating devices and scams, undesirables spotted in an area, etc. It doesn't share the casinos private databases, only a certain few items that a casino cares to share. The more often they share then they find more casino reciprocating and sharing valuable information with them.

It is also a great way to get quick help identifying an unknown person of interest, and with just a few clicks your Alert request appears in any or all surveillance rooms that you select. There is great strength in numbers and the casinos have many common enemies. This ensures that the most up-to-date and relevant information is available in your efforts to identify potential problems in your casino.

We also have a very experienced games protection investigator and consultant who is a great resource for our clients. This person not only is continually updating our CID Database and responding to many of the SIN Alerts, but also is available to help with needed identifications of persons of interest or helping a casino better understand what might actually be going on in a particular incident. They sometimes send a video clip and the consultant's experience is a great asset for the casino.

What is Private enrollment?

This enables the casinos to build their own private databases in as many different categories as desired ad be able to search the together with, or separately from, the CID databases. Because these are private within the casino, these can also include databases of banned patrons, self-excluded patrons, high rollers, VIPs, celebrities, vendors,

dealers and other employees. Unlike some other software, these are never stored offsite at a vendor site where true confidentiality is likely an issue.

How do you deal with incident reporting?

Per request of many of our casino clients, this module was added in recent years. It is a very user friendly way to manage all the information that needs to be documented by casino surveillance and security. Incidents, events, daily logs, procedure violations, accidents, large cash transactions, monies recovered, management reports, audit trails, etc. It standardizes and speeds all the input by the agents and also produces a nice variety of instant summary reports for the management team. There is a significant advantage to have the documentation module for surveillance and security integrated with all the games protection modules.

What is the Mobile Database Access?

This new module enables surveillance to send photos and data directly to a person on the casino floor who can receive the Alert via an iPhone, iPad, or any web-enabled device. It can also be set to allow remote searching of the databases, and SIN Alerts, so that managers on the floor have the information more readily available and don't always have to phone surveillance to check a name in the databases. This uses the secure wireless network likely already operating within the casino.

Does Biometrica provide training and support?

We usually do onsite end-user training for casinos utilizing the face recognition or incident reporting modules. Casinos using just the other modules usually find that having us do some remote training sessions via the Internet is more than sufficient because the software is so intuitive in design.

Our support staff has many fewer support calls due to the advances we've made over the years and the software is very reliable. Almost all issues can be quickly addressed during a quick support call or by electronically sending an update.

What are the most important factors for consideration in identity verification systems with regards to for example facial features?

You obviously want to see as much of the face as possible and have reasonable cameras and lighting. Because we make many measurements of every face, we often can match someone even with sun glasses or facial hair that is not in the database photos because the other face parts may be enough. If a hat, scarf or other item is blocking too much of the face view, then no software can match what it can't see.

What is involved in the Biometrica Visual suite?

Casinos can select their desired combination of the above modules and the system is available via flexible rental. Most modules are also available for outright purchase for the greatest long term economy if desired.

How does your systems technology differ from others in facial recognition effectiveness?

Ours is designed specifically for casinos and is an integrated package with our databases that we know work well with the FR. We've had many comments about how it is very easy to use vs. some other systems where the management likes the nice reports but the front line agent users really dislike some other software's user non-friendliness.

Is lighting an issue or is your system unaffected by such issues?

All systems are affected to some degree by lighting conditions, but this has become much less of an issue as the casinos have evolved with better cameras, improved lighting overall, and our FR has advanced. We can also lighten images after the fact, which proves helpful in many cases.

How many countries do you supply your systems too?

We are in 175+ casinos across the USA, Puerto Rico, Canada, Aruba, Bahamas, and other parts of the Caribbean,

and this is expanding. We expect to be in several more countries within the next year.

Skin colour can be an issue on 2D images in Identity cards and passports, so how can your system pick out features on people of various nationalities?

We don't hear this as an issue with our clients, probably because, again, we are not restricted to match or no match as is a biometric access control system and colour doesn't really take preference over shape and measurements. Our system can lighten dark skins tones for more detail if needed, and filters such as race and gender can be activated before searches whenever appropriate.

How do you see the future of this specialist industry?

To start, we are focused on the casino industry and that is an environment where not only the casinos need high security but so do all its patrons. Everyone knows that casinos have thousands of cameras, recorders, surveillance and security agents and other technologies that protect to patron as well the casino patrons. Patrons would not feel safe going into casinos without that.

Think about this: you often see casino patrons with big cash in view, stacks of chips at their tables, and they get up for the restroom and leave it all on the table. These same people would be scared to flash their cash in view back home at their local convenience store, but in casinos they feel safe. Our CID databases and SIN Alerts have plenty of undesirables who steal from other patrons as well as from the casino. The system isn't creating giant databases of all patrons, but is mostly used for known undesirables and certain persons of interest for one reason or another. It is not Big Brother except maybe in terms of a big brother looking out for his younger siblings to protect them.

What's the best business advice you have ever been given?

Focus on the customer and their needs. Ken Blanchard taught a lot of people a lot about customer obsession. We've had some growing pains at times over the years, and surely had some rough spots with this a couple of times in our first few years, but our clients now know us well and know we really take care to do right by them every day, and they are recommending us repeatedly.

For those casinos that are unsure about incorporating this technology what advice would you give them?

First, with 175+ casinos of all sizes as client, there is a big reason feel good about the software. Second, we offer a very flexible rental with no long term commitment. Rent it for a short while and it will quickly prove its worth. If not, just cancel it. We get very few cancels and almost all of those are across the board budget cuts, casino closings, etc. We've had several surveillance directors get promoted from one property to another and if they find their new property doesn't have Biometrica they call and tell me to set them up with it because they sure don't want to run a surveillance operation without it. They know it is profitable for the casino and good for their department.

If you had a wish for the industry what would it be?

I would wish for even more operators to be more aware of how very inexpensive technology can be a great tool making surveillance and security more productive and effective and that helps maximize their casino's profit. I've still encountered a few old school directors who still have agents using pen and paper for reports and relatively unsearchable files of photos. Some expect that agents can remember every face, name and activity and association as well as a computer can. We at Biometrica are about enhancing casino intelligence and that is a profitable path we recommend for all casinos.

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