GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Production

7/1/2024

A Worthy Investment

Brian Groves

In hindsight some investments are a no brainer. We can all look back and ask ourselves, “Why didn’t we do that sooner?”

Sometimes it’s the big investments: the potting line, the loading dock, the conveyors, the software system. Some are the smaller things that have an outsized impact: VPD propagation controllers, GPS truck tracking or even just voicemail transcriptions that show up as an email.

For us, one of the best investments we’ve made in the past few years has been security cameras.

This started as a way to monitor our pump station and irrigation controller remotely. We added a camera pointing at the control panels, which allowed our irrigation technician to monitor it from anywhere. An added benefit was the ability to scroll back in time—a feature that at first glance seems basic, but it has tremendous benefits.

By quickly scrolling through a day or two, we can easily see how many times a pump cycles. When this increases over time, there’s an indication of a leak somewhere in the system. This historical view has allowed us to confirm that the irrigation cycle ran to completion or to know how far in the cycle it got before it got interrupted. And because we put the camera and network video recorder on the battery backup system, it keeps recording even when the power is out!

We expanded this to have cameras in other places as well. At the loading dock we have cameras that monitor the trucks being loaded and unloaded. When the inevitable mishap or accident occurs, there’s indisputable video evidence about the circumstances surrounding the event.

We put a few cameras in our gutter-connect houses to make it easy to confirm that the sidewall vents are opening and closing like they should. Another camera keeps an eye out on visitors at our propagation houses. Yet another few cameras are strategically placed along the main driveway to track vehicle traffic.

Our mentality was to have the perspective: When something goes wrong, where will I wish that we had a camera? Obviously, there are an infinite number of potential accident/theft/mishap locations, but we all know where they’re most likely to occur. But beyond the damage liability concerns are items that are locations that just give us peace of mind knowing we can go back in time if we’re curious.

Just this year our cameras have come in handy for an equipment fire (happened on a holiday), spotting a broken pipe at 11:00 p.m. (which allowed us to turn off pumps before damage was incurred), and several power outages in the middle of an irrigation cycle (which allowed us to easily pick it back up were it stopped). For us, the cameras continue to demonstrate an outsized return on investment. **GT**

Brian Groves is the second generation at Panoramic Farm. His background in engineering has proved beneficial as Panoramic recently added a greenhouse division to the existing nursery operations. Brian's main responsibilities are designing and overseeing expansion projects, implementing new technologies and process/IT improvements.