

ControlByNet Reseller Frequently Asked Questions

This document is designed to provide detailed, informative answers to some of the more common questions posed by resellers entering the video surveillance hosting business. It is by no means a complete list and some of the answers will change in time based on enhancements within hardware as well as within the software application.

ControlByNet's i-flashback Hosted Surveillance is a complete solution to ensure secure, efficient and reliable communications between the reseller and its customers. Some suggestions are in place to maximize bandwidth efficiency to save costs to integrators.

What important items should we realize before moving forward?

We are not only a software development company but are also an integrator. The decisions we make for the software directly impact yours and our business as an integrator so we have to keep in mind how servers, clients, support and most importantly bandwidth affect costs. For instance, the cameras we support for hosting are there for a reason. ***Others we have rejected use 6-10 times the bandwidth so are not viable cameras for a hosted solution.***

Within the below questions note the areas where our decisions are made based on practical business savings, which will save you a lot of hassle and costs from the start.

How do we sign up to become a partner/reseller?

We evaluate each candidate to determine if our solution will be a good fit within the candidate's current business model. Those that appear dedicated to providing the best solution to customers and following through with the effort required will be welcomed by us.

What is the support (marketing and technical) provided to the reseller?

ControlByNet has a partner website containing many materials. The items include sales and marketing tips, support info, sample contracts, suggested hardware, marketing materials (flyers, signs, decals) as well as general helpful links (online contracts, e-mail list creation, e-mail marketing, etc). Our partner site is constantly evolving to provide as much information as possible to get you going.

We fully support resellers through an online knowledgebase, e-mail and phone.

Should we host i-flashback remote or keep it on your servers?

It's hard for us to make a case for or against either solution. One option is let us host and then if the number of cameras is increased and you feel confident then you can always move to host internally. However if you have the IT expertise and feel comfortable then it is certainly feasible to do the hosting yourself from the start.

If you choose to host yourself you have the minimal costs of bandwidth, server equipment and software license. We can assist with anyone wanting to host internally.

Customer location also plays a part. If you are in a remote location where International Internet might not be reliable you should consider hosting yourself.

What kinds of cameras are compatible with your system?

While we accept some other manufactures (Panasonic, D-Link, Vivotek) we currently prefer using Axis IP cameras for any hosted solution. There are certain criteria that the Axis cameras meet which the others do not which impact bandwidth. Axis also makes video encoders which allow us to quickly accept analog cameras. If ControlByNet is hosting the cameras, we will only accept Axis cameras so we are not adjusting pricing for the additional bandwidth usage on other makes and models.

We will continue to add other manufacturers. We fully expect the list of hosted cameras to grow as manufacturers make the necessary adjustments. If you represent a camera manufacturer please feel free to contact us about supporting your cameras in our installations and throughout our resellers.

Our partner pages suggest the ideal cameras for most situations.

What is the minimum bandwidth required to stream the video?

Bandwidth requirements will be a function of the camera settings. Frame rates (usually set at 1), compression (low), resolution (usually 320x240 or 480x360) as well as low-light settings will play a big part in overall needs.

We often put up to 12 cameras on a 128K upload DSL connection. The key is upload speed as that will be the primary direction of video.

~75% of our hosted cameras are at 320x240 and 1fps. Lobbies, halls, garages, offices....all work well with these settings. However that is changing as we support higher frame rates and resolutions. It's up to the customer and integrator what works best without going overboard and breaking the bank.

Every settings change effectively costs you bandwidth and storage. Keep that in mind and keep limits on what you'll offer. If it's a mall or airport a local option might serve them better with higher resolutions and frame rates.

Does the customer need to have a static IP address?

The customer site is not required to have a static IP address. Dynamic DNS works well in most locations. Since this is a security application we often advise getting a static IP address if the monthly cost is minimal, however it is not required. Common sense should be used to provide the best solution possible.

We also utilize the Axis one-click service which allows you to quickly install a camera without any port forwarding required. This works well for small installations, however for larger installs we suggest having a direct route to the camera to better assist in remote troubleshooting.

What is the pricing for video storage and monthly subscription charges?

Pricing will vary with location and with reseller requirements. A good baseline for the customer is \$26-35/mo/camera for 320x240, 1fps, low compression and 10GB storage (~21 days on average). If it's a single camera it would likely be higher and if the customer has a higher number of cameras it might decrease slightly. We've seen \$45 per cam and even higher with longer storage.

If ControlByNet is hosting, the charge is \$13/mo/cam to the reseller. The reseller controls the account and can charge whatever the market will allow.

How does i-flashback remote compare to an onsite version (i-flashback local)?

The software appears and runs exactly the same. There is no difference from a user perspective. This makes it easier for the reseller to use a single solution for varying customer situations.

What kind of architecture is i-flashback built upon?

i-flashback runs on a Windows system (XP Pro, Vista, 7, Server). It does not require a server version to operate correctly. The database is SQLite and the application contains a built-in web server. I-flashback is a fully integrated system and does not require other software.

How many cameras can run on a server?

Putting a number here is a dangerous option....what kind of OS, processor, memory, resolution of cameras, frames per second, number of accounts, number of clients accessing, how many actually recording motion? All play into the role of determining the optimum setup.

We've run 150 cameras on a Vista Home Quad-Core doing standard settings. But if all were recording at once it wouldn't be feasible. However we don't squeeze that many generally on servers. Of course those are split among multiple accounts as it would be impossible to pull a live view from that many cameras.

Our general guideline is to run 50-70 cameras per server but have some with many more. We run on XP Pro/7 with a raid card and dual 500GB+ drives (and will run Windows 7 Pro).

Why not pack it full?

- We always want to keep room to up-sell resolutions (clients will often move 1-2 cams up to 480x360). This of course requires more disk space and if we had a full server we couldn't do it.
- Secondly, many clients end up adding one or more cameras. We need to allow for growth.
- Last, we try and split servers for customers with multiple sites. Also really don't want to have a power supply or maintenance to cause all cameras to go offline. It's similar to putting your web server on a different server than your mail.....just avoiding a total outage.

Each OS has certain internal limits/settings so we do advise using a professional or server version. Client accesses and number of cameras also impact those decisions.

What about running in virtual machines?

There are various reasons that virtual machines/servers may be deployed. Some of the main reasons are isolation of applications (to prevent conflicts), consolidation (for easier management of less hardware), ease of testing (due to taking system snapshots/rollbacks/etc), and migration (allowing virtual machines and their apps to be moved to other hardware relatively easily).

We do believe that virtualization of a stand-alone CBN installation can benefit an organization. However, in practice, we believe that virtualization of a live CBN ASP (multi-account) system is likely to be counterproductive.

1) CBN ASP is architected to separate user account processing as much as possible; thus there is little chance of one account impacting another. Hence, isolation is taken care of within CBN.

2) CBN ASP should take priority of all devices, particularly with respect to network and disk I/O, with CPU load a little ways behind. Due to the typical nature of usage and load, it is unlikely that a single server could sensibly be used for other operations without potentially jeopardizing the system availability.

Currently we are modifying our licensing authorization app to make better use of cloud-based computing so all methods of remote hosting can be addressed.

What are some advantages unique to ControlByNet's i-flashback solution?

Centralize Multi-Site Login: Being able to combine multiple sites into a single login is a huge advantage to gaining those corporate customers. The added functionality of attaching servers across the Internet allows even onsite servers to share authentication with hosted servers.

Bandwidth control: i-flashback automatically assists with network bandwidth by reducing video sent when no motion is occurring. The 'view cams' page will slow to update after 3 frames if no motion, and the 'view groups' page after 5 frames. Motion activity however will always remain live.

Branding: A reseller with dedicated servers at ControlByNet or hosting its own servers can place logos and branding in the application. It can be branded for specific customers (with dedicated server) or resellers in general.

Server Account Management: Resellers with multiple accounts or hosting its own servers have full access to an account manager to quickly view accounts and check disk quotas, licenses, bandwidth per client, etc.

HTTPS: Central authentication via HTTPS is a key security feature that is vital to hosting customer data. Customers should be made fully aware of systems that do not employ security.

Camera Proxy: This is actually a huge benefit unmatched elsewhere. We can actually allow you to go directly to the camera settings page through our browser without opening up ports. This allows us to quickly add camera support while allowing you full access to advanced settings.

Camera Support: While Axis is the primary camera now, we fully expect some other manufacturers to make the jump with the ability to remotely support. You won't be locked in to a single product line.

Functionality with add-ons: Our solution can work in tandem with our guard station application as well as our full-screen-viewer app. Many customers appreciate the ability to grow and make improvements to the overall security system over time. You might be surprised how many small companies display the security cameras in a corporate office for management. It's not just for large installations. The guard station gives you a great inroad for larger organizations, where multiple problems can be solved. However, neither of these is required but both are nice to have 'in the back pocket'.

How do you compare with some of the other hosted solution providers?

We actually work with some of those providers. There are only a few hosted solutions where the architecture allows you to truly handle multiple clients across servers; the others are essentially just hosting a separate dvr per customer. Those that do host multiple customers on servers are generally aimed at what we call the 'flower shop customers'....those with 1-2 cameras. The technology is more of a convenience, and not so much a security offering.

In addition, the option of tying in a guard solution for security companies or large organizations is not there with any other hosted provider. That flexibility for growth without extensive costs is lost.

What about audio support?

We currently do not support audio as it has its own challenges which are often disregarded. Audio can be a bandwidth and storage hog, which doesn't bode well for setting firm storage limits on customers. It also is more difficult to keep aligned with the video archive over an Internet connection that will fluctuate.

Additionally it's legal liability. We understand that we/you can be sued regardless of direct impact. Many states do not allow single-side recording and it's such a low percentage of requests that it is not worth the risk. A user can always go directly to the camera for audio.

Unless it's a very clean and controlled environment the audio is often muffled with all of the surrounding noises. When it becomes a priority item we'll address it.

Are mobile platforms supported?

We currently support all 90% of devices in some form without installing any apps. In some cases it may be partial support but that depends more on the individual device as opposed to the operating system. Our priority is not to compromise the hosted network, either on security or bandwidth, so that it doesn't negatively impact costs or security for the reseller.

What about browser support?

We intend to always fully support the most common browsers. Currently these are Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari and Chrome.

Do you offer any remote language packs?

Currently our software and support is in English only.

Are there any special requirements to host our own servers?

Authentication via email requires a mail server to keep system secure as well as keep administration easier for password recovery and new users. You can use your current mail server, an online option or we can assist.

We are emphasizing security which enables you to market to customers. It's a valuable asset, but you must be sure the system truly is secured. We guide you through that process.

