

Five minutes with: Brian Cury, EarthCam

by Jochebed Menon on Feb 18, 2017

What does EarthCam offer developers in the Middle East?

We're promoting our new Control Centre 8 software here in the Middle East, and expanding it with new features and tools. It's designed around a lot of our other products, and many of projects in the Middle East are taking advantage of it. What's unique about it is that it stitches together thousands of photos. It pans the entire project, clicking multiple shots, and projecting them as one big picture.

With our technology, we can stitch together photos so you get a panoramic image. You are not [clicking photographs] with a big fisheye lens but in close-up. The technology is very different to what anyone else is doing in the Middle East, and Control Centre 8 lends itself to a lot of applications.

The product is a very powerful marketing tool, as pictures and videos can be shared across social media channels, enabling owners to share the progress of their projects to potential buyers.

Projects here in the [Middle East] are unique – they are very tall or very wide, and massive. The challenge is how to document that well. What we do is place cameras around [a construction project], and click pictures throughout the construction period.

At EarthCam, we offer clients a service that monitors their projects throughout the construction period, day in and day out. And cameras stay at the project, stationed on a pole, powered by either mains electricity or solar energy.

Cameras take multiple shots a day, zooming in to capture each and every development on the project, and these images can then be brought together as one big picture.

Each photo is made up of a close-up of a certain part of a project, and these can then be merged to create a detailed picture of the entire project.

How are construction cameras helping developers?

I think a lot of owners make a mistake here, as the information technology (IT) department is given the decision-making power. Many people do use cameras: they put up a security camera and say it's a construction camera, but it's not. There's a very different technology involved.

An [EarthCam] picture is made of thousands of close-up pictures. So you take 3,024-megapixel close-up photos and then merge them into a 10 billion pixel photo.

The technology we use to stitch photos is much like Google Earth. What looks like one photo is made up of thousands, which only gets to a very high resolution when you zoom in. It's a very different way of showing content and imagery.

But the misconception here is that people put up a camera, and once its installed they think their job is done. The reality is, however, that a camera is a very powerful tool for marketing.

For example, if you are trying to sell condos or fill seats in a stadium, you need to show pictures to people in the city to get them excited. You should share the progress of projects with the community and make it a part of your building process. If you take pictures over a two- or three-year project, people can watch your stadium or bridge take shape, which generates interest. This type of marketing and promotion can be very valuable to a project's owner and developer. Time-lapse videos are garnering thousands of views on YouTube for developers, which is a great marketing tool. The return on investment for it is very powerful.

What are some of the projects you are involved with in the region?

We have hundreds of cameras deployed here in the Middle East. The UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are our three biggest markets in the region. One of our recent contracts was for Sowwah Square on Abu Dhabi's Al Maryah Island.

We also have cameras at the first coal-fuel power plant in Amman, Jordan. Some of the other construction projects our cameras are monitoring are Jeddah Tower (previously known as Kingdom Tower), Msheireb Downtown Doha, Louvre Abu Dhabi, the 2022 FIFA World Cup stadiums in Qatar, and Qatar Rail.

Qatar Rail is one of our biggest projects in the Middle East. We have multiple cameras installed onsite, capturing images of the construction progress on the Red Line, Gold Line, and Green Line.

We've been working on some of these project for more than 10 years, the Louvre Abu Dhabi for example. You've got to be determined in this business.

