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## Fortune 500 ranked US MNC agriculture major chooses VAMS® to secure multiple locations in India

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Mr. Mahesh Vaknalli, Regional Security Manager – Monsanto India Region

Monsanto India Limited (Monsanto), the Indian subsidiary of Fortune 500 US-based multinational Monsanto Company, replaced its manual paper-based Visitor Management System with VAMS® in 2011.

VAMS® addressed all the shortcomings of Monsanto's previous system. VAMS® had no peer in the market, as it was the only system built on the core principle of two-factor authentication.

VAMS® is currently deployed at ten Monsanto locations. It has helped Monsanto to increase compliance to its security policies.

Monsanto is evaluating two more products built by V-Authenticate—a perimeter security monitoring system and an emergency notification system called OmniReach®.

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## Background

Monsanto is a sustainable agriculture company that delivers agricultural products to support farmers all around the world. Monsanto is focused on empowering farmers—large and small—to produce more from their land while conserving more of the world's water and energy resources. This is done with leading seed brands in crops like corn, cotton, oilseeds and fruits and vegetables. Monsanto also produces leading in-the-seed trait technologies to protect yield, support on-farm efficiency and reduce on-farm costs.

In addition to seeds and traits, Monsanto manufactures Roundup® and other herbicides used by farmers, consumers and lawn-and-garden professionals.

Monsanto India Limited (Monsanto), a subsidiary of the Monsanto Company, USA (the only publicly listed Monsanto entity outside USA) has a presence of more than six decades in India since 1949. Monsanto has helped to catalyse a revolution in India in cotton and corn, and productivity enhancements in vegetables, thereby enabling farmers to make India a self-sufficient global contributor. Monsanto focuses on maize (Dekalb®, India's largest selling hybrid maize seed brand) and agricultural productivity (Roundup®, the world's as well as India's largest selling glyphosate herbicide).

Additionally, Monsanto endeavours to boost crop productivity through its advanced research in maize cultivation, access to a wide library of global maize germplasm, breeding technology and techniques, new high-yielding hybrid seeds, best-in-class manufacturing facilities, extensive agronomic activities and on-farm technology development.

## Situation

Monsanto India has been ranked among India's Best Employers or Great Places To Work® in India ten out of the last eleven years.

"One of the factors that helped us win this recognition is that we are always open to try new and innovative technologies to improve our processes, productivity and working environment," says Mahesh Vaknalli, Regional Security Manager – Monsanto India Region. "As a technology company, we have a long history and deeply ingrained culture of R&D."

It was this proactive approach that initially got Mr. Vaknalli thinking about upgrading their Visitor Management System. During an informal interaction about 5 years ago, one of his industry peers happened to mention that they had installed VAMS®, a modern visitor management system supplied by a young Mumbai-based company called Viraat Authentication Systems Pvt. Ltd. (V-Authenticate).

At that time, Monsanto's visitor system was totally manual, with paper-based visitor log books and some spreadsheets for day-end tallies. There were several drawbacks to this process.

First, it was extremely difficult and time-consuming to carry out any meaningful analysis of visitor data, since it was not consolidated across locations. It would require a huge amount of manual effort to collate, de-duplicate and sort the data to observe any patterns or detect any breaches.

Second, there was no way to establish that a visitor coming to meet a specific Monsanto executive had actually met him, or had actually met someone totally different. Even though all visitors were required to be escorted at all times, there was no auditable trail to establish this.

Last and most critical, there was no authentication of visitors' identities. With hundreds of visitors every day across Monsanto's 28 locations—offices, manufacturing plants, research farms and laboratories—how does the company verify

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that the visitor is really who he claims to be? In the event of any unwanted incident, there was no traceability or evidence to fall back on after the fact.

Mr. Vaknalli therefore felt that significant improvement was needed in their visitor management system and did some preliminary research about the features and capabilities of VAMS®. Mr. Vaknalli says, "I found that the product addressed all the major shortcomings of our existing system. In fact, it really had no peer in the market as it was the only system built on the core principle of two-factor authentication."

Clearly, VAMS® merited further consideration, and in line with Monsanto's prevailing practices, he put up a business case for detailed evaluation. Other stakeholders involved in the evaluation included representatives of key functions such as administration, IT, HR and legal.

## Solution

After careful study, live demonstrations and due diligence of V-Authenticate, it was decided to go ahead with a 3-month pilot of VAMS® at Monsanto's corporate headquarters in Mumbai. Monsanto's corporate services team, who are responsible for facilities management, handled the installation while Mr. Vaknalli's team provided security process-related inputs.

"We kept the system under close observation during the pilot period," recalls Mr. Vaknalli. "Since VAMS® was relatively new in the market back then, we did come across a few teething issues. One example was the sensitive nature of visitors' personal data—a privacy issue—being stored by the application. Whenever we pointed out such issues to the V-Authenticate team, they were quick to address them and incorporate whatever changes were needed in a very co-operative way."

After the success of the pilot installation was established, VAMS® was gradually rolled out to additional locations outside Mumbai. It is

currently being installed at the tenth Monsanto location—the manufacturing unit in the Union Territory of Silvassa.

The choice of Monsanto locations to be covered by VAMS® is need-based, depending on criticality. Parameters such as number of visitors and the business need for access control are taken into consideration. The rollout sequence is also determined by availability of requisite infrastructure, such as access to the corporate IT network, bandwidth, etc.

One of the initial apprehensions was whether the security guards would be able to learn and use the new system correctly, since they had no prior knowledge or experience of using computers. In fact, in some remote locations, even English language capability of the guards could not be taken for granted. However, as Mr. Vaknalli still remembers, "The application was so user-friendly that guards were able to start using VAMS® with some minimal training and hand-holding. Only basic literacy is needed. In fact, guards now take pride in being able to operate a computerised system."

## Benefits

The first and most visible impact was a sharp reduction of workload in end-of-day reconciliation and audit processes. Duplication of effort was eliminated and comprehensive, accurate MIS reports were available with a few clicks, including visitor-wise history across all Monsanto locations.

This led to another benefit—security guards were now freed from a lot of unnecessary and unproductive work, and they could focus on their core competence of maintaining higher levels of vigilance.

Visitor identity authentication is at the heart of VAMS®. This procedure not only creates a tangible aura of security, but it provides hard data and concrete evidence that helps to track down visitors if the need ever arises. Mr. Vaknalli explains, "As a security professional, I can say that two-factor

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Monsanto had several standardized security policies and processes in place even before **VAMS**® was introduced. **VAMS**® has helped to increase compliance by providing a system-based backbone. "For example," says Mr. Vaknalli, "the logout feature reinforces our visitor escort policy. An automatic alert is generated if the visitor exceeds a pre-configured time of stay. This way, we ensure that the Monsanto host actually escorts the visitor out of the premises after the meeting."

Mr. Vaknalli adds, "The SMS alert feature is another boon to us. The Monsanto host receives an alert as soon as his visitor registers at the reception desk. Now if the host happens to be travelling or out of office, we can easily catch someone trying to enter the office on the pretext of meeting him. There have been such cases, including once with me, and thanks to **VAMS**®, we managed to detect them right at the entrance. Prevention is better than cure."

Monsanto's management and senior leadership team are also happy with **VAMS**®. They have noticed a perceptible improvement in discipline, since visitors are no longer kept waiting for inordinately long periods of time thanks to the host alert feature. This has created a more positive and professional image of the company.

Overall, Mr. Vaknalli feels that all stakeholders within Monsanto have been positive and have accepted the new system very well.

## Future Plans

In addition to the ongoing rollout of **VAMS**® to more Monsanto locations, Mr. Vaknalli believes that in the security business, nothing is static. "We have to keep evolving and stay ahead of new threats that can emerge without warning. We believe in staying on the cutting edge. We keep in touch with V-Authenticate to continuously improve the

system, and I have found them to be equally proactive in enhancing the product."

In addition to **VAMS**®, Monsanto is working with V-Authenticate on a couple of other programs that are directly linked to Monsanto Corporation's global initiatives. These include a perimeter security monitoring system and an emergency notification system called OmniReach®, both of which are currently being piloted by Monsanto.

Mr. Vaknalli sums up as follows: "The security industry in India is at a nascent stage. There is heavy reliance on traditional approaches like physical security methods. I believe that the security industry has never really used technology as a backbone or to support infrastructure. Evolution is required, and we saw **VAMS**® as one of the ways to take us to the next level. Companies like V-Authenticate who keep pace and evolve will always be welcome. We are very happy to recommend them to establishments that are looking for a strong security partner."

### Additional Information

For more information about Monsanto's vision, business and commitments, visit
http://www.monsantoindia.com

For more information about **VAMS**® and Viraat Authentication Systems Pvt. Ltd., visit www.v-authenticate.com or follow the company on LinkedIn

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