

We've just passed the Christmas shopping rush and, although this is a very profitable time for retailers, it also highlights security and safety issues that can't be ignored. The economy recovery has encouraged people to go shopping. But more people out and about also represent more risk.

When it comes to larger retail areas, such as shopping malls, getting accurate safety and security measures makes good business sense to avoid law suits and keep crowds under control.

Unfortunately in the UK, crime is not slowing down. According to reports, Scotland Yard recorded 3,440 crimes in East London's Stratford over the past 18 months. The area, which had a major revamp for the London 2012 Olympics, suffered from 500 shoplifting offences, almost 300 violent crimes and hundreds of pickpocketing and muggings.

Scott Brothers, Axis's Business Development Manager for retail in Northern Europe comments, "Loss prevention professionals are really focusing on investment in the future rather than quick fixes. RFID for example has been talked about for many years but the technology is mature now and in the next 18 months it will become a reality for many retailers. RFID value goes beyond controlling loss it also helps with stock management."

However, there is no one solution that can fit all and RFID tags can be an expensive resource in retailers such as grocery stores. Employing security personnel is a good way of deterring theft, but it is also cost intensive and people can not be everywhere at once. For this reason there is a growing trend of using IP networkable security cameras as a multi-purpose solution.

"The deployment of network video in retail bring greater value to the business overall rather than just stopping the bad guys," says Brothers and adds, "Collaboration between retail departments can provide ROI for technology spend such as network video owing to the added benefits the retailer can gain through integration with business intelligence analytics."

Land Securities, the commercial property owner, doesn't directly take care of its properties' security and safety but it has a policy to share CCTV footage with retailers if requested. It also pays special attention to retailer's concerns and ideas to work as a community. Mike Davidson, Head of Retail Operations at Land Securities says, "Retailers report a growth in organised theft from stores, where thieves operate in small groups. There has been an increase also in using technology

Security in store

to prevent detection, with devices that can block the Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) systems, which are used by the vast majority of retailers."

Robust solutions that integrate CCTV networks provide a more precise coverage of events and quick responses. An example is Milestone Systems's IP video management software which supports a choice of network hardware and integration with other systems. Its XProtect provides solutions to video enable organisations allowing them to manage risks more effectively, protecting people and assets.

Thomas Lausten, VP of sales Europe at Milestone Systems points out, "As the industry moves from analogue systems into IP-based infrastructures, the retail sector has new opportunities. The industry is experiencing a 20 per cent growth rate in the retail sector all across Europe for network video surveillance equipment. We believe that this is a proof of software becoming a key enabler not only for security, but also for the use of video as a business tool. In a truly open system, the right software can provide retailers with new ways of using video for better customer experiences, in shop customer flow analysis and more."

Checking larger areas

The primary purpose of security in a shopping centre is public safety rather than crime prevention. The sorts of problems that are required to deal with will be first aid incidents, responding to fire alarms, addressing health and safety risks, dealing with anti-social behaviour and providing customer services.

Mike Davidson points out, "In shopping centres deterring crime and supporting retailers in dealing with theft is a secondary to safety, but it is still an important function. Although the centre security teams' remit concentrates on the common areas, they are frequently >

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Images: Global Retail Theft Barometer

To protect their profits, retailers need to find solutions that will reduce shoplifting opportunities, avoid employee theft and maintain inventory accuracy. Geny Caloisi looks at the solutions



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called upon to assist retailer's security staff. Additionally centre security may have responsibility for external areas such as car parks where they will take care of traffic management. The shopping centre security teams therefore have to be very versatile in their knowledge and training to deal with the common area issues as well as having the knowledge to deal with certain aspects of retail theft."

The installation of IP CCTV cameras has helped shopping centres to manage more effectively what happens in communal areas. An example of this is the

Douglas Court Shopping Centre in Cork, Ireland. Owned by the Shipton Group, the centre decided to install Axis cameras, mainly to cut slip and fall injury claims. After the installation of 76 Axis cameras across the 13.5 acre site – which included centre's retail outlets, inside public areas and the centre's car park, the Shipton Group has almost eliminated slip and fall claims. As an added benefit it has improved its customer services, cut theft and fostered better relationships with the local police - which are able to use the images from the cameras in a court of law, if needed.

Scott Brothers adds, "Network video in shopping centres has a clear advantage over older analogue security systems. Megapixel cameras you can cover a greater area and also give more details when checking back to interrogate footage, because there are more pixels available in the image."

Accurate information is also key in other areas such as emergency alarms. For instance Powerpoint, a fire alarms company has been implementing Honeywell's Notifier Pearl to avoid false alarms.

Hands in the till

Light-fingered employees helping themselves

"The government and retail trade organisations should put together employee education programmes to avoid internal fraud"

have historically resulted in great losses for retail. The Global Retail Theft Barometer unveiled that 33 percent of losses in UK retailers are caused internally.

Peter French, CEO at SSR personnel, a recruitment agency dedicated to the security, fire, and health and safety sectors says that retailers need to spend more time training staff. "The trend of getting casual part time staff means that workers might be less committed to their jobs. The government and retail trade organisations should put together employee education programmes to avoid internal fraud."

Scott Brothers agrees, "Better training of new employees highlighting what constitutes theft or fraud combined with deployment of smart analytics such as POS monitoring, integrated with network video, should result in a reduction of these figures."

Technologies such as RFID tagging, IP cameras and intelligent alarms systems can definitely help the retail sector, but new threats such as cybercrime are a growing trend. Peter French says that in the past two years, the demand for specialised personnel dedicated to solving retail cybercrime issues has more than doubled. Cybercrime is where the physical and virtual world of retail are coming together.

In terms of store safety and security, old fashion resources still apply, for example use mirrors to eliminate blind spots in corners or keeping the place tidy with merchandise away from store exits to prevent grab-and-run situations. Make sure displays are full and orderly so employees can see at a glance if something is missing. And take care to foster loyalty and integrity from employees.

