

5 trends in loss-prevention devices for electronics

New options prevent theft while allowing for maximum interactivity without clutter

by John Mangiameli

With high-end consumer electronics—phones, tablets, e-readers, drones, digital cameras, fitness watches, etc.—the retail experience is important. Purchasing decisions can hinge on the look, feel, and performance of the product on display in store. Shoppers need to interact and experience features such as menus and apps.

Yet retailers can't let expensive merchandise "walk out the door" due to shoplifting or employee theft. Inventory shrinkage accounted for 1.38% of retail sales in 2016—up \$1.2 billion from 2015, according to the 2016 National Retail Security Survey. Nearly half (47%) of retailers surveyed reported increases in inventory shrinkage.

"Customers need to interact with our latest smartphones to see what has changed and how the devices perform," says Bill Jones, an AT&T regional director of asset protection. "But it is a balancing act between customer-product interaction and theft deterrence."

Electronic loss-prevention devices can protect this merchandise while allowing shopper interaction. Typically, these devices involve an alarm console, sensors, and accessories. And they now come with a wide array of standard and custom options.

An electronic loss-prevention device should not overshadow the product, be cumbersome, or be hard to maintain. Here are a few of the features retailers should consider when purchasing loss-prevention devices.

1 DUAL-PURPOSE WIRING. While most systems require a wire for security and another wire to charge the electronic device on display, systems with a single



AT&T wants shoppers focused on the product rather than distracted by security cords.

wire to provide both security and power are available. Arch Telecom, a wireless retailer with 140 U.S. locations, chose Vantage II by Se-Kure Controls.

"One thing that drew us to this system is how nice, clean, and modern it looked to have one cord," says Kevin Lasky, project manager for Arch Telecom. "There is no separate cable running up the side of the pedestal or coming out of the display to charge the phone. That was important to us."

The system also offers an option for dual sensors to prevent theft of the device, as well as detachable accessories of value such as lithium batteries or a removable camera lens for digital cameras.

2 RETRACTABLE CORDS. To facilitate customer-product interaction in the store, retailers can pair each phone with a retractable cord so it can be pulled off its pedestal and easily viewed from several feet away. When the shopper returns the phone to the pedestal, the cord retracts and a magnet enables ideal product positioning.

3 MULTIDEVICE POWER. Alarm consoles that provide continuous power and security to multiple devices reduce clutter in the store. For example, up to 12 tablets, smartphones, and e-readers can be charged from one console through a single cable via a series of USB ports with a Se-Kure Controls

system. This eliminates the need to plug in a bulky power adapter for each device into a power strip mounted below the display.

“Some options on the market create clutter and look outdated. They do not match the cutting-edge products or brands we promote,” says AT&T’s Jones. “We want the focus to be on the product, rather than on the power and security cords.”

He appreciates the simplified, cleaner look of the single-cord approach. It also simplifies removal of electronic products to a more secure location each evening to prevent “smash and grab” robbery attempts.

“At the end of each day, we put all our devices in an inventory room, and then each morning, we put them back on the display counters,” he adds. “Having just one cord helps us close down and set back up faster.”

4 DURABILITY. Jones also lauds his systems’ durability. Avoiding the need to repair or replace items such as the alarm box or power/security cords can lead to significant savings, he notes. “In an organization as big as ours, it can add up to millions of dollars over time,” says Jones.

5 CUSTOMIZATION. Because retail settings vary widely in their display requirements, loss-prevention devices frequently need to be customized. Some suppliers can make critical adjustments, such as accommodating the number and size of items requiring protection; changing pedestal height, security cord length, size, and color; adding retractability; and adjusting alarm, power, and sensor options.

With in-house metal fabrication and plastic injection-molding capabilities, as well as electronic manufacturing exper-

tise, some manufacturers also can adapt to changes in the types and styles of consumer electronics on the market.

With the global market for wearable electronics projected to surpass \$30 billion by 2020, the need to adapt loss-prevention devices to protect new products while allowing for continued customer interaction will only increase.

“Our retail stores are always experimenting with what we carry,” says Jones. “As technology continues to change, the adaptability of our loss-prevention vendors to accommodate those changes is important to us.”

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