

# LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION!

## Staff induction and empowerment films provide recession-busting new front line against fraud

**R**ETAILERS are reducing costs at every level of the business and investment in loss prevention and security is no exception, despite evidence that the economic downturn will cause an increase in so-called 'necessity' theft.

Some retailers have cut their guarding bills – by far the most expensive and visible security measures – by up to 50 per cent.

So how are loss prevention managers coping with the downturn and the trimming back of security investment?

Evidence suggests that they are turning to their most effective loss prevention tools – their employees – by motivating them to take action against both the external thieves and 'the enemy within,' the active minority of dishonest staff who are contributing to the UK's £4 billion shrink bill.

With literally thousands of staff members to reach with this new message, retailers are finding new ways of communicating and 'conscripting' them into the army against theft.

Steve Bownass, joint managing director of Ambit Professional Development, a specialist media based training company, argues that staff must understand the importance of the prevention of external theft.

"In addition, honest staff need "permission" to take action against internal theft along with reassurance that they will be supported by the company and can remain anonymous if they wish," says Bownass.

"Once empowered and equipped with the appropriate procedures and actions, the positive cultural values of the majority of staff will prevail over the apathetic and dishonest minorities."

"A carefully constructed, high quality, media – based training

package is a highly effective way to engage, motivate and inform all staff. It is simple to facilitate, quick to roll out and involves people from all levels in discussing generic and local issues, committing to future actions and coming up with new ideas about loss prevention."

Bownass says such training, done properly, will increase specific information from and general communication with stores and will give store managers confidence that head office 'understands' their particular loss prevention issues.

Ambit has worked with a number of UK retailers including The Co-operative Group, Boots and Peacocks.

Michael Foligno, head of loss prevention for Peacocks, which engaged Ambit to make a training video to be shown to all staff, says: "The DVD identified with clarity our expectations that Peacocks Loss Prevention requires attention, unity, involvement and support from everyone. The guidelines and scenarios within reinforced the point that all colleagues can have an impact on this major business driver no matter which department they work in."

"That Loss Prevention culture is now firmly incorporated within our Retail Strategy and the DVD enabled us to put a face to the beginning of that change."

With the Co-operative Group, the brief was different again and, working with shop worker union USDAW, an interactive DVD with a number of optional scenario endings was created to focus on the front line issue of violence against store staff.

Richard Quinn, Food Retail, Head of Loss Prevention for the Co-op, says: "Our stores are located in communities where our staff live. Some of the people who may display violence to staff may also be members of that same

**The positive values of the majority will prevail over the apathetic and dishonest minorities**



community, so it puts them in a very difficult position. Although there aren't necessarily any right or wrong answers, it is clear that our employees' own behaviour will influence the outcome of a situation, so the DVD that we have worked with Ambit on has a number of endings for each scenario. Staff can choose one approach and watch it play out to see how the behaviour influenced the outcome and could impact on the store and staff."

"There are clear guidelines in the training that our teams must follow for serious incidents. However for other incidents the scenario based DVD and group learning will demonstrate that there are ways to deal with incidents to influence the outcome positively, reducing the impact of violence on our store teams. With the launch of the training to our teams this Autumn, I am confident this will have an extremely positive impact and be welcomed across our trading estate," adds Quinn.

Robert Jennings, head of loss prevention at Boots adds: "We saw the DVD Ambit had made for Peacocks and liked the generic messaging that takes staff from day one of their employment on what we expect from them. We also saw it as a way of revitalising the communication of loss prevention issues. We launched our DVD at Christmas last year which is a busy time with lots of temporary staff helping during a busy period. It is engaging and to the point and has been very well received." **RF**