

Are you getting the most out of your security system?



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Group 1 Security is a specialist in Retail Asset Protection providing solutions to both large and small retailers nationally and are a preferred supplier for the Australian Retail Association.

For a considerable period of time CCTV has been used across the retail landscape. So much so that the cost of cameras is usually automatically factored in as part of a store's set-up cost.

While cameras looking over your store provide many benefits (visual deterrent, identification of thieves, capture of false claims by customers for trips/slips, etc), in this day and age, if this is all you are using them for, you may be short changing yourself.

For a reasonable period of time, CCTV has been mapped to a store's point-of-sale system and, while in the early days it was a bit hit and miss, the systems in place now are very robust and highly effective.

The main reason for integrating CCTV with your POS is to assist in carrying out internal investigations. Once it has been set up, when you view the CCTV monitor you should see a split screen, one half showing footage of the register operator conducting transactions and the other displaying a copy of the transaction in progress.

I can't overstate how helpful this type of system is when conducting investigations, but while any electronics security provider can easily install CCTV cameras in your store, the same can't be said for POS-integrated systems.

If you are looking at moving into this type of system, I would strongly advise that you engage a company such as ADT, as they have extensive experience with these types of systems and will often carry out a POS-compatibility pre-test prior to any installation, insuring that any glitches will be minimised or avoided altogether.

Before you have this system put in place, you will need to talk to your provider regarding your searching perimeters. Some search perimeters you should include to assist with investigations are:

- Refunds by dollar amount
- Refunds by product
- Refunds by operator number
- Voids
- Overrides
- Price inquiry followed by a 'no sale'
- Discounted transactions
- Multiple products under X
- Suspended transactions
- Multiple of the same products
- Cash outs.



The above search titles are key headings and should be broken down in greater detail. Refunds by operator number, for example. This could then be broken down into:

- Transactions between certain times: 9.10am and 11.15am
- This operator's number on a specific register
- Refunds carried out by this operator
- Voids carried out by this operator.

As you can see, the list could just go on and on.

When the system is being put in place there are a few things you should consider:

1. Advise all staff in advance that cameras are being put in place above the registers (in some states this is a legal requirement, in others it's just good management).
2. Placement of the camera is critical. You need to ensure that when the operator is working at the till, you have a view of the register opening, the register operator and the area where a customer would stand. It's amazing how many businesses spend good money on this type of system only to have the cameras positioned in the wrong spot, thus rendering the system useless.
3. If you are only looking to put this in place over a couple of registers, I would strongly recommend that you place dummy cameras over the remaining registers so that staff assume all registers are covered by CCTV.

Once this system is set up and ready to be used as an investigation tool, there are a few things you should do to ensure you're maximising your time.

1. Always check the transaction before and the one after. This allows you to be comfortable that you are viewing the correct one. If the products don't match the

register receipt on the screen for the one before or the one after, then chances are there is a timing issue and the actual transaction you want to see will also be wrong.

If this happens, the quickest way to gauge how far the timing is out is to have someone stand at the register while a transaction is taking place and then carry out a search for the transaction. Once you see your colleague at the register for the transaction, compare the time on the screen to the time in the store.

2. If your CCTV isn't linked correctly to your POS when daylight saving kicks in, you could be looking at footage that has an hour's difference to the actual transaction.

3. Communicate with your IT team. Unfortunately, I learned this lesson the hard way. I had one of my staff carry out investigations based on a couple of anonymous tips and, after some time, he told me that the information was all wrong and that there wasn't even a register operator on the till at the time in question.

After some prolonged discussions, it was identified that IT had remapped some of the registers while carrying out a few upgrades and the POS/CCTV integration hadn't picked up the changes, and that what the system thought was register 5 was now register 6.

One thing I found very interesting was that once we had put this system in place, we had a few key stores I was confident staff were stealing from. As the first few weeks passed, though, there was no deliberate wrongdoing, only a few procedural issues.

However, about a six weeks passed and the cameras became part of the furniture, staff went back to their usual ways: the honest ones remained honest and the thieves, well, they got caught. ■