Using Technology to Enhance the Relationship between Loss Prevention and Local Law Enforcement

by Detective Raquel Betti

Detective Betti is a police officer with the City of Stockton (CA) Police Department where she is currently assigned to Case Review as the online shoplifting program coordinator. In this position, she is responsible for training new store loss prevention team members on how to use the online shoplifting reporting program. Det. Betti has held a variety of other roles in the department, including assignments in the department's patrol, robbery/homicide investigations, and school resource officer units. She can be reached at raquel.betti@stocktongov.com.

It should come as no surprise that local law enforcement agencies have to carefully prioritize their resources, including their officers' time. According to the US Department of Justice's release, *Local Police Departments, 2013: Personnel, Policies, and Practices,* nearly half (48 percent) of all local law enforcement agencies employ fewer than ten officers, with only two officers employed per 1,000 residents on average. This means that law enforcement agencies need to efficiently address the service calls they respond to, giving more priority to immediate threats to public safety and less priority to misdemeanor crimes like shoplifting—a constant concern for all retailers, whether they are local mom-and-pop stores or national retailers with hundreds of store locations.

Delayed Response

To protect against shoplifting, many retailers employ loss prevention teams as the first line of defense to guard against theft and to apprehend any malefactors. It is the responsibility of the loss prevention department to detain any offenders until a law enforcement officer can arrive on the scene to take the alleged perpetrator's information and file an official police report. Unfortunately, other more immediate threats to public safety may result in delayed response times to shoplifting incidents, which consequently results in the release of suspects without formal reports or charges being filed. This often causes strained relationships between loss prevention, the retailers they serve, and their local law enforcement agencies.

The Stockton (CA) Police Department was facing these same challenges responding to shoplifting incidents reported by local retailers. Limited resources resulted in delayed response times that ranged from fifteen minutes to four hours, with the estimated average response being around one hour. As a result, a number of large retailers in the city worked with the department to implement a technology solution to streamline the shoplifting reporting process.

Reporting Solution

The shoplifter reporting solution from LexisNexis Risk Solutions allows loss prevention teams to process shoplifting suspects online in as little as ten to fifteen minutes, and then release them in instances where no direct interaction between a law enforcement officer and the suspect is required. The system is configured to capture all necessary information required to submit a full report to the appropriate agency, allowing for more accurate filings in a more efficient timeframe. Using this solution, loss prevention departments are able to save time in terms of response, increase the number of reports that are filed, improve the accuracy of the reports, and cut costs.

The San Joaquin County District Attorney's office has seen a marked improvement in the shoplifting reports coming from retailers that have implemented the technology solution. Deputy District Attorney John Calabrace says that the loss prevention departments will take the time to include all the details about the incident—details that may be unintentionally left out of a report that is written by a police officer. This is understandable since the
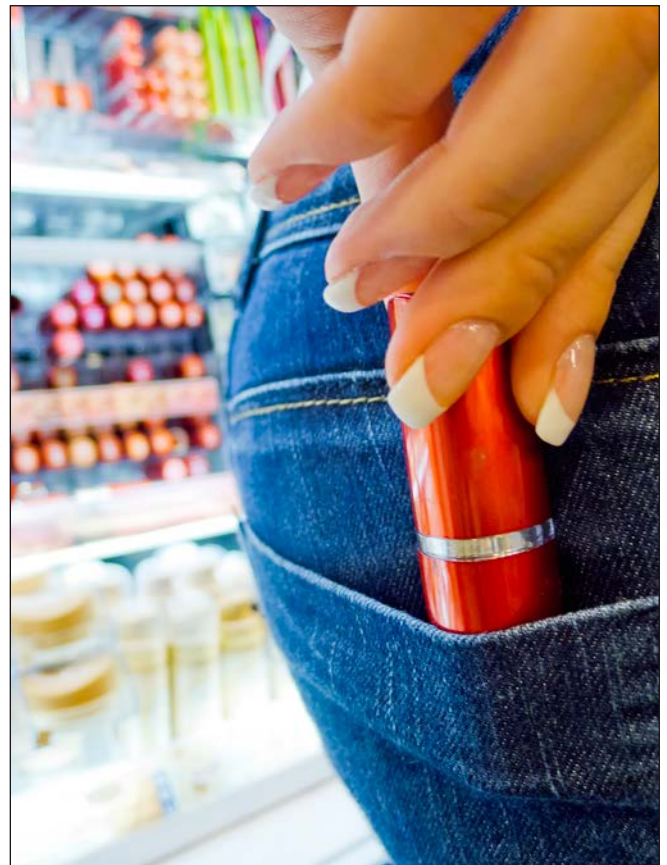
> **By integrating technology solutions like the shoplifting solution used in Stockton into their processes, retailers are enabling loss prevention departments to complete their jobs faster and more accurately and are allowing law enforcement agencies to allocate resources to where they are most urgently needed, thereby saving costs, increasing the probability of prosecution, and improving working relationships between retailers and their local law enforcement agencies.**

loss prevention representative is providing a first-hand account of what happened while the police officer's reports are not.

One local representative for a major retailer noted, "It simplifies the reporting process by giving us an opportunity to clarify and confirm information before submission, and it offers us a reduced sense of urgency when dealing with suspects. The ability to submit the report after the suspect is away takes an edge off of the interaction, meaning I can focus on processing the individual without the distraction of having to focus on a written report with a potentially agitated suspect."

Ongoing Collaboration

The efficient collaboration between loss prevention and law enforcement is essential to the continued deterrence and prosecution of criminals negatively impacting the retail industry. It is not always possible for law enforcement to send an officer to handle a misdemeanor offense, allowing perpetrators to go unpunished.

To ensure the continuation of an excellent working relationship with law enforcement, retailers should consider providing their loss prevention departments with the best, most streamlined tools to effectively guard their business from theft and encourage efficient interaction with local police.

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