CASE STUDY: SUPPRESSING RETAIL CRIME

A GROWING PROBLEM
A recent publication from the BRC (British Retail Consortium) stated that the direct cost of crime to retailers was £603m in 2013-2014. This represents an 18 per cent increase on figures recorded in 2012-13 and the highest level of theft recorded for ten years (source: www.brc.org.uk). A lack of traceable evidence linking shoplifters and internal thieves to their crime has traditionally hampered retailers and the police in their ability to arrest and prosecute offenders. This has perpetuated the problem by incentivising thieves to continue stealing. With police resources increasingly focused elsewhere the threat to retailers has never been higher.

MEETING OBJECTIVES
In December 2012 SmartWater® Technology Ltd entered into contract with one of the UK’s leading DIY and home improvement retailers, with a targeted remit of suppressing incidents of shrinkage within 30 of its highest risk stores.

One of the key objectives of the Retailer was to maintain a policy of having high-risk items on open sale in its stores in order not to alienate honest, law-abiding shoppers. SmartWater was ultimately considered to be the best method of maintaining this ‘light touch’ that would not damage or disrupt customer service levels, but was still capable of demonstrating its crime-fighting ‘teeth’ when put to the test.

SmartWater’s innovative crime prevention methodology, known as The SmartWater Strategy™ was deployed on behalf of the Retailer to reduce stock losses from its 14 worst-affected stock categories, including batteries, garden tools, power tools and light bulbs.

METHODOLOGY
The psychological use of the SmartWater brand was critical to the success of the project. A wide variety of SmartWater signage and literature was displayed throughout each of the stores along with their warehouses, car parks, entrance-exit areas and on perimeter fencing. The objective of this was to create an air of uncertainty about how and where SmartWater may have been used to protect stock, raising several common-place concerns for the would-be thief, namely:

• “Am I going to be caught?”
• “Will they be able to prove the item in my possession isn’t mine?”
• “Will I be able to sell the stolen item on if it is marked with SmartWater?”

A number of covert sting operations targeting internal and external threats were carried out across the 30 stores by SmartWater Investigators. This led to the arrest of three individuals in connection with a major internal fraud involving the theft of over £125,000 worth of the Retailer’s assets.

Elsewhere, the deployment of SmartWater aided the identification of a shoplifter who stole £1,800 of tools from the Retailer’s Maidenhead store. The thief was sentenced to 20 weeks in prison, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to attend drug rehabilitation.

A CHIEVING RESULTS
At the conclusion of the two year SmartWater project, the Retailer confirmed that theft-related losses from the 14 most frequently targeted stock categories had fallen by **14 per cent** across the **30 stores** deploying The SmartWater Strategy.

TESTIMONIALS
During the SmartWater project, the following testimonials were provided anonymously by Store Managers:

“There has been a decrease in shrinkage in a couple of key areas”
“I believe it has had a positive effect on shrinkage”