

American Apparel Deploys Smart Safes To Drive Down Theft

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By *Bob Johns*, associate editor

The specialty apparel retailer uses smart-safe technology to protect its assets and employees.

Cash is an integral part of retail, even with the growth of payments such as debit and credit. However, cash handling can be timeconsuming, relies on associates to be accurate, and can place associates at risk in robbery situations. American Apparel, the specialty fashion retailer, needed to find a better way to handle cash to save time, increase accuracy, and improve safety for its associates.

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American Apparel is a technology-driven company, implementing progressive e-commerce and RFID programs over the past two years, but when it came to cash handling, “That was the one aspect of our operations that was not so technologically advanced, and our visibility to our retail stores and securing the cash was limited,” according to Blue Montez, director of asset protection with American Apparel. “Like other retailers, we had issues with cash variances and at times could not identify the source of the variance.”

A Perfect Test Environment For The Smart Safe

American Apparel also initiated a strong presence at flea market locations across the U.S. in the middle of 2011. These flea markets were staged in random locations, sometimes in abandoned warehouses, and took in several thousands of dollars in cash, which was secured in standard safes. Montez worried not only about the possibility of theft, but also about the possibility of employee risk when opening the safes. “I felt there was a better way to secure our cash and at the same time knew there were smart safes on the market that could leverage technology to our advantage by providing us with instant visibility of our cash and safe users,” Montez notes. Rather than reaching out to safe providers directly, Montez researched LinkedIn and read message threads between vendors and customers to formulate ideas on what was in the market at that time. In his research he came across a thread referencing Triton’s VersaSafe, indicating the safe provides SMS text and email messages on the currency value of the safe. At this same time American Apparel was preparing for a San Francisco flea market. Montez contacted Triton reseller, Customer 1st Safes, to have a safe shipped to the San Francisco flea market and for installation and training. The management team was trained on the safe’s use, and the initial test at the flea market went flawlessly. Using this experience, American Apparel installed Triton VersaSafes in its highest volume locations.

Reducing Theft And Counterfeit Acceptance

The smart safe has changed the way American Apparel operates from the top down. Montez points out, “Our accounting team now reconciles daily sales reports quicker, has the ability to identify variances earlier, and is able to correct them easier.” The retail operations team has access to view safe user records and currency value for audit purposes much more efficiently and in real time. The asset protection group has reduced internal cash theft and variances by 98%, and counterfeit bill acceptance has been reduced by 45%. “Using the bill feeder, our cashiers never need to access the safe, and potential thieves can see the associate does not have direct access to the safe’s contents,” Montez explains.

“At the store level, we have totally changed the way we operate with regard to cash handling and securing our cash, as well as cash deposits and armored carrier services. The smart safe is an adaptable solution for our retail stores as well as a mobile solution for our off-site flea markets,” says Montez. Triton worked directly with American Apparel

to customize the VersaLink website dashboard to accommodate the users of the smart safe, incorporating custom reports. Through the site, all parties who need access to the reports and live safe information can log in and see everything in real time. The cloudbased solution is used daily by the accounting team, operations team, and asset protection team for audit compliance.

With the VersaLink dashboard, appropriate company personnel can view real-time data from any web-enabled device, even their smartphones. They can monitor the safe's cassette capacity to order a pick-up; view overall cash levels; view and print personnel, shift, and end-of-day audits; view the health of the safe to dispatch technicians; or even send data directly to the financial institution. All of these features give managers, LP personnel, district managers, and others the ability to work from real-time data when reviewing store and associate performance. Store managers can view the cash levels, both validated and dropped, against POS figures to look for discrepancies even when away from the store.

For More Information On Triton Go To www.versasafe.com

