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“To retain profit, you have to be able to measure it, which we now can because we are always dealing up-to-the-minute accurate figures. The relationship we have with ORIS is great because the team is like an extension to our team who all pull together to get problems solved. It provides us with a unique support structure because if we want to change anything, we can make a phone call to ORIS and it is turned around in a couple of hours” says Emerson.

While Case Manager is largely field based and exclusive to the Profit Protection Team, Incident Manager, the second solution Argos now has up and running, is designed to help the head office ‘Solutions’ team identify hot problems around the country and prioritise their work loads accordingly.

“We were in the market for a new incident reporting system because our existing tool which had served us well over 12 years had reached the end of the road and was no longer supported by our IT team. We therefore needed to find a replacement that was easy to use and could be implemented quickly,” says Sherry.

The smart new incident reporting system that Sherry and his team played a major role in developing, maps incidents of ‘shrink’ as they happen.

“Our Solutions Help desk receives 1200 calls per week and deals with everything from acts of crime to broken CCTV systems. It operates 24 hours per day so prioritising action was like trying to find a needle in a haystack under the old technology regime of opening up unwieldy spreadsheets,” explains Sherry.

The technology identifies trouble spots for retail loss, identifies patterns of behaviour, analyses cost to the business and even highlights opportunities for civil recovery against offenders. It collates all incidents as they happen and, in serious incidents, even alerts managers to thieves’ modus operandi and predicts their likely next target. In addition it provides real time analysis of the problem by country, region or individual store by numbers of incidents, their cost and their type via detailed reports so that Argos can monitor loss and act on the exceptional patterns of behaviour highlighted. Senior management can be alerted via email or SMS as soon as a burglary or robbery is logged, day or night.

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Lloyd Emerson, Argos’s Crime Analysis Manager, says that although Incident Manager is a bought in technology, the relationship with ORIS has meant that Argos were the first to use what in essence is a bespoke product that he and the team helped design and develop.

“This flexible way of working is very important to us as our mission goal is to have an intelligence-led function that means there is no place for shrink to hide. The fact that we helped design it was also attractive to us because between ORIS and ourselves we have made it easy to use for non-IT people,” he says.

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Reducing shrink is now everyone’s responsibility at Argos as the tentacles of ORIS’s Case and Incident Manager spread throughout the business to help catalogue and order the problem to enable the Profit Protection Team to set the priorities for the multi-channel retailer as it sets its co-ordinates from GUS to growth.



The ORIS Group Ltd
Home Farm, Ardington
Oxfordshire OX12 8PD

Tel: 0870 787 1170

Fax: 0870 787 1171

Email: info@orisgroup.co.uk

Web: www.orisgroup.co.uk