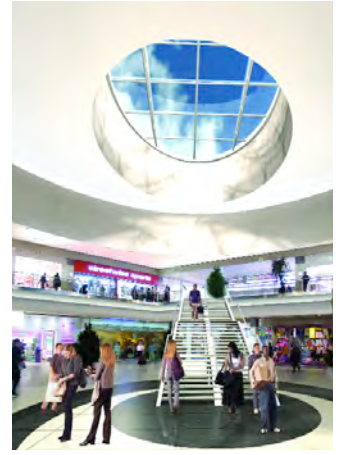


Secure retail design

Kay Wright of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) looks at some of the key rules for ensuring the safety and security of new retail ventures and how getting it right from day one will prevent avoidable losses and potentially costly revamps at a later date



One of the key factors when securing a new venture is working out the risks. A major risk that needs to be protected against is crime. As in other aspects of retailing, basic design is a key consideration here.

Well lit and carefully laid out shop floors that allow customers to circulate and view the merchandise can also become a security asset by avoiding areas of concealment. Well planned

space also lets retail staff see what is going on, enables them to help customers more effectively and acts as a deterrent to visitors with less than honest motives.

In summary, good basic design delivers an attractive environment and optimises customer service, whilst also forming the basis for other, more specific, security measures.

The nature of these additional measures will vary from store to store and from place to place, although there

GOOD BASIC DESIGN DELIVERS AN ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND OPTIMISES CUSTOMER SERVICE

are a few common requirements that apply to all premises. One, of course, is the need to protect the premises from intrusion after hours. Sound physical security is a must and most insurance policies now require an intruder alarm linked to a monitoring centre.

Depending on the area, the use of roller shutters on doors and windows may be appropriate - the police crime prevention officer can advise on this and on any relevant planning restrictions that may



exist in conservation areas and similar places.

The shopfitting stage is an excellent time to install all forms of security, since it allows contractors to conceal electrical wiring and other fittings without the disruption that sometimes occurs during retro-fitting. Importantly, it also enables staff to be trained in their use in order that any queries or faults can be ironed out before the doors are opened to the public.

Many retailers report excellent results from the use of in-store surveillance cameras with video/digital recording facilities, both as a deterrent and to provide evidence of theft for future investigation and the prosecution of offenders. A key requirement is always to employ reputable suppliers. Many shop owners have been

disappointed to find that the security 'bargain' they thought they had found is of insufficient quality to be accepted as evidence by the courts.

Some stores combine this technology with security personnel, which can prove highly effective. A number of shopping centres and town centres have now formed shop watch groups and similar schemes, in which store detectives are 'shared' between several shops. In addition, most such ShopWatch groups now operate a retail radio link, whereby shop staff can exchange security information directly between themselves, patrolling wardens and the police. Many groups also qualify for up-to-date police intelligence, including photographs of known shop thieves, as well as access to

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legal exclusion schemes that bar prolific offenders from their premises.

The use of alarm systems is commonly extended to protect staff and merchandise during trading hours, such as by electronic tagging systems that alert staff to goods being removed without first passing through a cash desk or checkout. Intruder alarm systems can also be easily and economically extended to incorporate panic buttons, allowing staff to raise the alarm in case of personal attack or attempted robbery. Personal attack buttons are particularly useful in high risk premises such as jewellers, convenience stores and petrol stations.

Retailers in similar categories should ask about "Raid-control", a national crime prevention initiative which aims to raise security standards in retail premises in order to reduce the risk of robbery and increase the likelihood of detecting offenders (see www.raid-control.org).

The British Security Industry Association is the trade association covering all aspects of the professional security industry in the UK. Its 570+ members provide over 70% of UK security products and services and adhere to strict quality standards.

For more information, see www.bsia.co.uk, email info@bsia.co.uk or telephone 01905 21464.



Images of the new Arndale Centre retail development, Manchester, courtesy of Prudential