

Training for the shopfloor

Those working in retail security will, on a day to day basis, deal with a wide range of people and situations. Specific, dedicated training is essential. Here we find out why life on the sales floor demands such a structured approach



Security officers are exposed to incredibly diverse issues in the retail environment ranging from the extreme (a customer was stabbed recently in a supermarket after allegedly queue jumping) to thieves, drunks and innocent people just going about their daily lives. No to mention the robberies of all shapes and sizes that can happen anywhere and at anytime.

So what can retailers and security companies do to protect their staff and assets from the threat of theft and abuse? The answer is security officer training.

Due to the current modular flexibility in the Basic Job Training (BJT) scheme (part of the SIA training required to obtain a security license) it is possible to adapt and modify the programme to suit the needs of the officer's role. It is this ability to develop bespoke courses that some companies are using to hone the skills of their officers.

"The BJT, which every officer undertakes, hasn't changed much over the years and is generic in content" says Chris Fieldhouse of Advance Security. "As a result, we have developed a change to the programme which



incorporates a 'Retail Common Sense' session on day five of the scheme. This reinforces all of the most important parts of the BJT, such as arrest procedures and identification of would be offenders, but has also been designed to incorporate the specific needs of the retail environment."

By delivering bespoke training the officer is developed to meet the exact security need of the store they are assigned to. For example the type of people that an officer may encounter in a high-risk city centre environment will differ from those shopping in leafy suburbia. The store may be owned by the same retailer, and the layout more or less the same, but the demand on the officer will be worlds apart.

"Due to the nature of the job, the best form of retail training is continuous" explains Chris. "Firstly there is the necessary training in order for officers to be SIA licensed, and then there is regular on-site training and development followed by individual further education in areas such as RADS (Retail Award for the Development of Security Officers), an accredited vocational training course.

Guarding companies need to provide their customers and employees with a structured training programme throughout the course of a contract. Such a programme should contain both accredited qualifications and a timetable of refresher training to ensure standards are consistent throughout the term.

On-site visits

According to Advance Security the best way to up-skill an officer in the retail sector is a continuous reinforcement training programme with the encouragement of self development i.e. RADS.

"During the on-site training we task the officer with up to four subjects related to in-store security issues, from a menu of twenty two. These subjects are designed to be trained in a walk through, talk through manner whilst remaining on the sales floor," says Chris Fieldhouse. "This enables the identification of genuine areas of concern in a live situation. Furthermore the first five minutes of the visit should be a covert observation of the officer to further identify training needs."

Of all of the areas covered by retail security training the ability to communicate effectively with members of the public, and identify would-be offenders, are priority skills. How can an officer identify a potential thief from a genuine shopper? Such an ability comes from learning to read the body language of a suspicious person. The classroom environment only offers the very basics in terms of situations, people and experiences and hence there is the need to constantly refresh these skills.

"By setting clear and precise training objectives the customer and supplier can monitor achievements on an ongoing basis, justifying investment and recognising improvements specifically related to training," says Chris. "This in turn will lead to better staff retention as well as improved performance."

It is clear the value of a properly trained security officer is vital to the retail sector in many ways.

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