



Accountability At All Levels: The Antidote to Retail Losses

With more than 35 years' experience and innovation in Retail Loss Prevention (LP), Mike Keenan is acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities that this field presents to both retailers and TAL Global. "Retail, and therefore Retail LP, is present in many environments," he says. "I feel that this is a market we can provide a full TAL Global experience to, starting with Retail LP, but offering a full spectrum of additional services and expertise that will control losses and keep employees safe."

We took the opportunity to sit down with Mike Keenan ([link to MK's Bio](#)), TAL Global's Managing Director for Retail Loss Prevention, for an in-depth interview about his area of expertise and his vision of the future of Retail LP.



Q: Why is Retail LP important to any retail environment?

A: Effective Retail LP will improve the profitability of every retailer. By protecting merchandise, a retailer will have more product available to sell to its customers. By protecting its cash and credit card sales, every retailer will maximize its cash flow. By keeping its employees safe, each employer will have less worker's comp claims and create an environment where employees feel valued. Employees who feel valued are less likely to cause losses.

Q: What is your philosophy on Retail LP?

A: Retail LP is a proactive science and art. It is an initiating, rather than a reactive endeavor. A good Retail LP practitioner studies the unique challenges characterizing his/her client, creates strategies and programs that prevent loss, implements them and keeps adapting and improving, constantly and in real time. There must be a true partnership between company management and the Retail LP effort. The most effective loss prevention approach is not having losses in the first place. Of course, there will always be things that must be responded to, but the more we can prevent, the lower our losses.

Q: What do you think is the most important element of Retail LP?

A: Accountability at all levels is undoubtedly the key to effective Retail LP. And when I say accountability, I mean bringing everybody into the fold: management, employees, customers, and communities. Accountability means that everybody involved with the retail experience is physically, psychologically and emotionally engaged in loss prevention. For example, there are many tools to help control loss and keep employees safe. They include: Audits (Inspect what you Expect); Internal and External Theft Controls, such as CCTV, Alarms, Locks, Safes, Inventory Controls (receiving, sales, returns and damages), Cash, Credit, People (Awareness and Safety); Shoplifting Prevention; Organized Retail Crime (ORC) Mitigation; Honesty Shopping Campaigns and Ethics Priming; Paperwork/ Systemic Controls; Awareness Programs; Employee and Customer Safety; Exception Reporting; and many more activities. However, without accountability, it is not possible to get the maximum benefit from these tools. Retail LP strategy should be integrated into every aspect of the retail process.

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Q: What is the place of technology in Retail LP?

A: It is important to understand that technology, both hardware and software, is critical to successful Retail LP. Technology is a huge enabler of many Retail LP activities. These technologies include: Exception Reporting; Case Management; Cash Tracking; Bad Debt Tracking; CCTV; Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS); Radio Frequency Identification (RFID); Inventory Protection Devices; Alarm Systems; Smart Safes; Access Control; Facial Recognition; Returns Authorization; Shopping Patterns, etc.

Q: What is the first thing that needs to be done to foster Retail LP?

A: I believe that the first step is creating the Retail LP strategy for the customer, to include all the required human elements, in coordination with technology - both hardware and software. This would require conducting a survey of the retailer and then tailoring a specific, multi-layered LP strategy that best fits the specific business.

Q: What do you think about the place of retail investigations- internal, external and systemic- in Retail LP?

A: Even after building an effective Retail LP strategy there will be people who try to circumvent it, both inside and outside of the company. Therefore, we must be able to investigate situations that are causing loss; first to stop the loss and, second, to learn how the loss was occurring so we can put proactive measures in place to prevent future loss. Having a strong investigative capability is also a deterrent to those people thinking about causing loss. If they know they can get caught, they will be less likely to steal.

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Q: How about online shopping? Can we offer anything to these businesses?

A: Definitely. Even though it seems that the main challenges of online retailers are in the areas of IT Security and credit card control strategies, online retailers all have distribution centers where they handle products which certainly require a robust Retail LP program to protect, plus they all have employees which they want to keep safe.

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