



How to Pick a Lock

InstaKey system helps AnnTaylor **switch** quickly, efficiently

BY LIZ PARKS

LP professionals generally make news when they catch a thief or break up an organized crime ring, but most believe they have done their job best when they do things that don't generate headlines — such as implementing programs that deter crime.

That's why Larry Clark, distribution center security manager for AnnTaylor, is so pleased with the integrated key-tracking system the apparel retailer is rolling out. Developed by Denver-based InstaKey Security Systems, it combines specially designed hardware with real-time record management.

AnnTaylor had been using an interchangeable key core lock system. But with more than 800 stores, it took a lot of time and manpower to maintain a secure lock system.

The New York-based retailer maintained a stockpile of about 8,000 lock cores and keys at its Louisville, Ky., distribution center. "If we needed to change lock cores in stores in California, we would replace them with cores we had used in another state," Clark says. "It was not very efficient. We spent a lot of time preparing sets of cores and keys, sending them out, and we'd have to replenish the sets. It was very time-consuming."

Whenever keys were lost or stolen, there was also a considerable amount of

concern for store managers, who would have to wait a day or more for a new set of keys and lock cores to arrive, remove the compromised cores and ship them back to the DC.

The InstaKey system, which is now in a high percentage of AnnTaylor stores, provides restricted keys that cannot be duplicated because the key blanks are not available on the open marketplace. Through InstaKey's web-based software, retailers can track each key and/or key blank, all marked with a unique serial number that links it to an individual key holder.

When AnnTaylor is fully converted, it will be able to dispose of its cache of cores, "freeing up space and capital," says Clark. "Everything that we own from InstaKey is in the stores working for us versus sitting in a room waiting until it's needed."

No need for locksmith

According to Clark, InstaKey "tailored the program to our needs and they walked us through the conversion process every step of the way. I still approve who gets the keys and who doesn't, but now LP is out of the handling of the physical equipment" and the stores complete the re-key process immediately and without the assistance of a locksmith.

With AnnTaylor's old system, there was no way to monitor who had which keys. The

paper-based key-tracking system only told LP which keys were at which stores and who had signed for them. "We couldn't match a specific key to a specific person," says Clark.

With InstaKey, all the keys are serialized, so LP managers can see who a key is issued to and to what store it belongs. "If there was an incident at a store involving an entry with a key," says Clark, "I would be able to see who had access to the keys to that fa-

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cility. I can also monitor compliance.

"If stores are not filling out their key receipts or returning control keys, I can see that and follow up," Clark says. "We also conduct random audits so managers know that we are monitoring compliance with the program."

The software also provides a variety of exception and audit reporting tools that help track the number of re-keys that have taken place. "If they see a lo-

customized InstaKey training materials and informational messages that explain what the new program is, how it works and when they can expect a locksmith to perform the conversion.

Step change

Once the conversion is complete, managers are given a re-key packet containing a new set of keys and a "step change" key, which would be

used to change the configuration of the core pins if a key is lost or stolen.

AnnTaylor can undertake a step change process several times at a given location before the cores have to be replaced. On the old system, "every time we replaced a lock, we would have to prepare a packet," he says. "The store would have to go around and remove the cores. Most of the time the stores could do it



STEP BY STEP

- When a key is lost, stolen or simply not returned by a former employee, AnnTaylor stores do not have to change their locks.
- Instead, store personnel retrieve the re-key packet containing a "step change" key. Inserting the step change key and turning it 180 degrees removes one of the pieces of the brass wafer in the lock core, reconfiguring the pins and rendering the old keys unusable. New keys are distributed, and a new step change packet is ordered by dropping a postcard in the mail.

Instead of waiting for new cores to be overnighted and installed, management "can now go home at the end of the day and know that their store is safe and secure," says AnnTaylor DC security manager Larry Clark.

cation that has re-keyed three or four times," says Cita Doyle, director of sales and marketing for InstaKey, "LP can investigate further to find out if that store might have a training issue because they are not getting the keys back when employees leave or maybe they have a turnover problem."

AnnTaylor contracts with a locksmith service to install the cores each time it takes the program into a new region. It then provides managers with

themselves, but there would be situations where the cores would freeze or you couldn't get the pins back into place and facilities would have to send a locksmith.

"This system is much more efficient," Clark says. The ability to get several key changes out of a core means a store "might be able to go years without ever having to pull the cores. We are definitely saving time and money for our people."