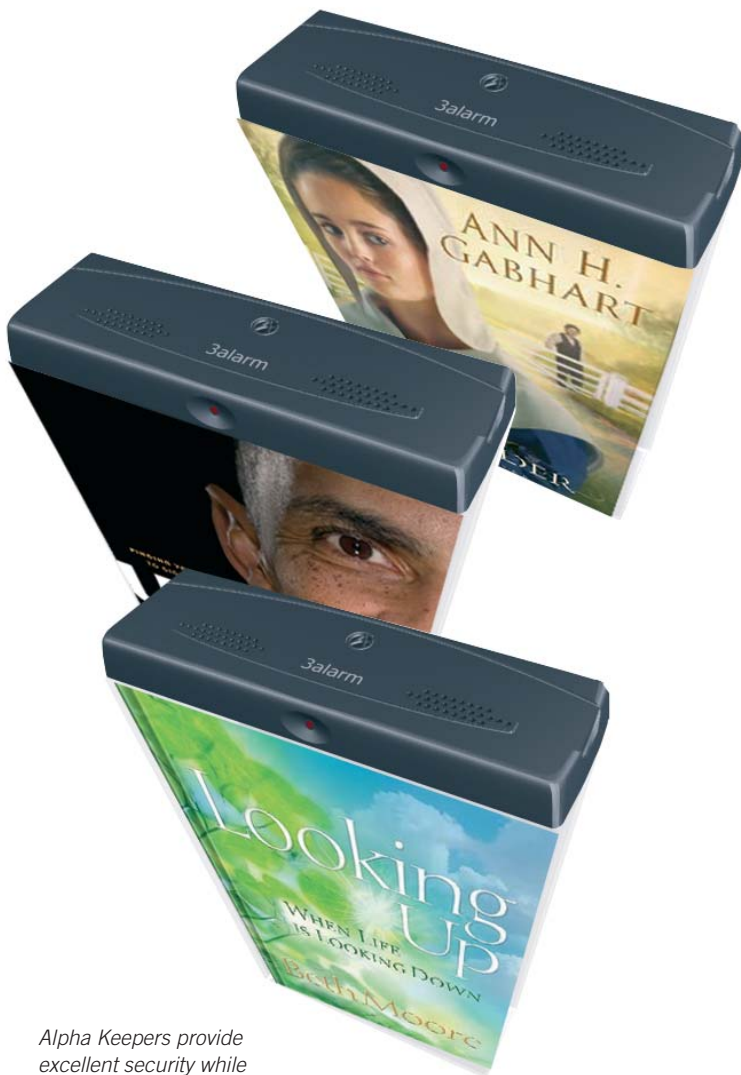




Cut shrink with Keeper Systems

Secure display packages help Family Christian Stores reduce CD and DVD shoplifting losses.

By Fiona Branton



Alpha Keepers provide excellent security while helping to keep products on open display.

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All retailers understand how difficult it is to control shoplifting of small, high-value items, such as music CDs and DVDs. And for the retailers that are the targets of such theft, the ultimate price includes not only the value of the lost merchandise, but the negative impact on customer service due to out-of-stocks. Family Christian Stores, Inc., a specialty retailer with over 300 locations and more than 5,000 employees in 37 states dedicated solely to the \$4.3 billion Christian retailing market, was experiencing the frustrations associated with shoplifting. The retailer sells Christian products and church supplies through its chain of stores and via the Internet.

High shrinkage rates in music CDs and DVDs at some of Family Christian Stores' outlets prompted Associate VP Loss Prevention Chris Lienesch to seek a solution that could be easily and cost-effectively implemented in stores that needed it. "In some stores, certain music categories would get completely cleaned out by thieves," Lienesch reports. Lienesch, who had previous experience with keeping music and video media secure at Circuit City, decided plastic keepers – locking frames that the cashier removes at the checkout – combined with an EAS (electronic article surveillance) alarm system would be the best solution.

After reviewing products from two other vendors, Lienesch selected Alpha Security's keeper products, due in large part to the products' designs, which resulted in the best combination of security and aesthetics. Lienesch considered using EAS tags alone, directly affixed to each product, but those can be cut off the merchandise by enterprising shoplifters. The keepers make the CDs and DVDs more bulky – and thus harder to steal – and they are virtually impossible to open without a special key, making the products locked inside the plastic boxes useless to thieves.

Deter shoplifters with visible security solutions

The keepers that Family Christian Stores use – The ACM202RF for music CDs and



the AVM556BRFR for DVDs – are clear boxes made of a durable polycarbonate that allows customers full visibility of the products inside. “It isn’t apparent to customers that the CDs are inside keepers until they pick up a product,” says Lienesch. “Plus, the trim design fits well with our metal grid fixtures. We have high standards for the appearance of the merchandising in our stores, and we needed a solution that would be accepted by

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our general merchandise department. Some of the keepers available from other vendors were cheap-looking and didn’t meet our merchandising standards.” The Alpha keepers come preinstalled with EAS tags, which adds an extra level of security because an alarm will sound if someone attempts to leave the store with a keeper. The keepers are not used in all of Family Christian’s stores, as some locations are not experiencing a significant enough problem with shoplifting to justify the expense. Lienesch bases his decision to invest in keepers for a particular store on whether he estimates the solution will pay for itself within a year and a half.

Now, store associates simply place CDs and DVDs in the appropriately sized keepers for display in the stores. Customers who want to purchase an item bring it to the POS, where associates use a strong magnetic key (compatible with Alpha’s entire line of keeper products) to open the keeper and remove the product inside. Since the cases are pretagged with EAS labels, there is no need to deactivate those tags, or any need to purchase EAS tags for each CD or DVD. The empty keeper is then restocked and returned to the floor. The keepers allow the stores to openly display merchandise rather than storing it behind the counter, which is both more convenient for store associates and customers and more conducive to sales.

Family Christian Stores associates are happy to have a simple-to-manage solution that helps them battle shoplifting and ensure that high-demand merchandise is available to customers. “Several of our stores that use the combination of EAS and Alpha keepers have seen their shrink decline by 50% or more,” says Lienesch. “Store managers have reported seeing known shoplifters come into their stores, notice the new equipment, and turn and leave empty-handed, never to be seen again”. ■