



# Surveillance with a Twist

Popular pretzel peddler opts for professional perlustration program to improve operations

Since its humble beginning as a Pennsylvania farmer's market stand in 1988, Auntie Anne's Inc. has grown to include more than 1,100 franchise locations in 44 states and 22 countries—mainly in malls, airports, train stations, university food courts, and anywhere else people are on the go and likely to have a hankering for a taste of baked “golden brown perfection,” as the company refers to its pretzel products.

These days, Auntie Anne's army of employees rolls more than 500,000 pretzels every 48 hours, which is enough to feed one of the tasty, twisty treats to every person living in Lancaster County, Pa., home to company headquarters.

While the company attributes its success to the strength of its brand, the efficiency of its stores, and, of course, the quality of its pretzelry, it says it also is improving operations with the increasing presence and power of surveillance cameras.

About three years ago, Auntie Anne's established a partnership with DTT Surveillance, a Los Angeles-based provider of surveillance systems geared especially for the restaurant and hospitality industries. Now, as the “preferred surveillance vendor” for the prevalent pretzel purveyor, DTT says the relationship is expanding dramatically and that it is rolling out systems in franchise locations all across the country.

“The continuing adoption of DTT throughout the entire franchise community has demonstrated the true value of surveillance and loss prevention services for this excellent QSR [Quick Service Restaurant] brand,” says Thomas Moran, DTT executive vice president.

## 'Omnipretzence'

One of DTT's proprietary offerings is called SmartAudit™, a tool that involves a crew of DTT loss prevention specialists analyzing video from cameras set up in the various stores, seek-

ing out suspicious transactions and employee behavior in general, good and bad. The “audit” portion of the program consists of 10 customizable questions (“Did all cash appear to be secured?” “Did employees appear to use safe work habits?” “Did the kitchen appear clean?”), each of which is assigned a point value and the results of which are used for regular comparison reports that identify the best- and



worst-performing stores monthly; trend reports that reveal performance trends by stores enterprise wide; and focus reports that home in on the areas most in need of attention throughout the enterprise.

“The consistency that SmartAudit provides is one of the most important factors in the value of the service,” says Don Boyle, DTT VP of loss prevention services and architect of SmartAudit. “Sharing the audits with the employees is a constant reminder that they are being evaluated on a regular basis. This creates what I like to call positive paranoia.”

Boyle adds that the audit's value is maximized by the DTT crew's ability to

see nuances in the transactional data it analyzes. “The thing that makes SmartAudit different is that we have loss prevention professionals that do nothing more than analyze POS transactions all day long,” he says. “They look at the trends, if you will. It's not just the exceptions; it's not just the fact that there is a void or a deletion or a refund. It's the timing of the transactions; it's the order in which the transactions occur.


learning tool for my crew,” she says. “The opportunity to review footage with the team and learn from both mistakes and/or excellence is irreplaceable.”

Gower adds that while she does not have an issue with employee theft at her location, she has had instances of workers not adhering to company policies and procedures, including one case of an errant texter.

“Texting it strictly forbidden during working hours, so when we reviewed the footage of this employee washing the dishes and texting at the same time, we recognized an opportunity for her to learn from the mistake,” Gower says. “Our whole team suffered from the incident because we put much more emphasis on the ‘no-texting’ policy, but as a result they now know not to text while working and therefore are much more productive.”

Along with the increase in productivity and security, having the surveillance in place has served to improve her crew's customer service and awareness of what it takes to raise dough, she says.

“Overall, since installation, the quality of my operation has improved a great deal. We can monitor how long food has been in the pretzel warmer, keep track of cook times, and also make sure that employees are in fact preparing food correctly,” Gower says. “There is no better way to see what your staff is doing in the backroom or at the store front, how they are preparing food and handling customers. Mystery shoppers will not catch things they can't see; SmartAudit will.”

In addition to the Auntie Anne's family, DTT says its systems oversee nearly 2 million employees every day at some of the world's most popular eateries, including McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, Taco Bell, and KFC, to name a few. 

“From an operational perspective, the impact that SmartAudit has is omnipresence, if you will. You have these audits that are happening on a regular basis, so they're a constant reminder to the employees that not only are these expectations in place, but they're being audited on a regular basis so they have to hold to those expectations. . . .”

## Texting While Pretzeling

Karen Gower, an Auntie Anne's franchise owner/operator in the Burbank, Ohio, area, says she uses the DTT system as a training and counseling tool and that she considers the audits critical to the success of her business.

“The system has proven to be a great

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