

Alpha Spins a Continuous Web of Innovation

Loss prevention managers and retailers have one goal in mind when it comes to shrink management—develop more sophisticated ways to prevent or detect theft, while creating an “open merchandising” environment that encourages shoppers to buy more. To meet that goal, Alpha leads the industry when it comes to designing and engineering many of the most innovative and utilized high-theft solutions.



ALPHA[®]
High Theft Solutions

A DIVISION OF **Checkpoint**

Case in Point—The Alpha Spider Wrap

The original concept of the Spider Wrap was developed by Alpha in 1996 after studying the shrink challenges encountered by one of their large consumer electronics customers. The retailer was having difficulty protecting boxed merchandise of different sizes—in particular boxed hard drives—and they required a single, “one-size-fits-all” solution. Previous attempts at protection ranged from employing plastic and metal bands to various types of collapsible bags. However, these concepts distracted from the branding and merchandising set and were difficult to apply, especially on the sales floor.

Alpha’s General Manager Larry Yeager and their team of engineers were determined to provide a solution for six-sided box security—one that would be adjustable, but also secure enough to deter theft. Their efforts paid off, and the “Universal Wrap” was born.

The solution offered the adjustability needed to fit a variety of boxes while providing EAS deterrence. Through the use of retractable cables that wrapped around each side of a box, the Universal Wrap pioneered a new era in security. Once the cables were ratcheted into a cinched position, the Wrap could not be removed without a specialized magnetic key. The solution also provided flexibility with differing EAS technologies by offering RF and AM versions. Alpha filed for patent protection on the Universal Wrap, and was awarded a U.S. patent (5,722,266) for the technology in 1998.

Next-Generation Wrap

Despite the success, the Alpha team was not finished. They engaged retailers to provide candid feedback on the performance of the Wrap and, in response to that feedback, began to make improvements. The next generation no longer required the use of a separate tool to tighten the cables. An integrated, on-board cable tightening mechanism was now housed in a smaller body and on-board electronics would audibly alarm if a cable was cut. This pioneering breakthrough led to Alpha’s ongoing market leadership in alarming technology.

Retailers were realizing that Alpha’s wrap solutions were a key contributor to meeting their shrink-management goals. When a retailer commented that the device body and cables were reminiscent of the body and legs of a spider, the Universal Wrap became the “Spider Wrap[®],” which has become one of the most trusted theft-deterrent solutions in the global marketplace.

The story of the Spider Wrap is just one example of the successes in innovation that Alpha has experienced. They continue to pioneer new solutions, and the results are continually recognized. One loss prevention director recently stated, “Alpha has filled a void by engineering very merchandise-specific, shrink-prevention devices that bring unequalled creativity and shrink deterrence to the market along with excellent customer satisfaction and increased merchandise availability.”

Alpha is currently developing the next generation of Spider Wraps. Key features include a stronger locking mechanism, a smaller body for improved merchandising, “no tangle” cables, and dual EAS technology. An XXL size is also being developed to protect extra-large boxes for items like plasma TVs.

Investing in research, development, and product management to fuel Alpha’s innovation pipeline is essential. It shows their commitment to solving retailers’ challenges by inventing the tools necessary to sell more and lose less. With nearly 200 patents under their belt, you can be sure that Alpha will continue to provide positive contributions to the industry. ■