

The B&Q Initiative - Summary

Introduction

1. In March 1999 a new B&Q superstore opened on the outskirts of Blackpool. The location of the site borders onto a busy housing estate which in itself has its own particular problems. The store lies within the policing responsibility of officers from the Geographical area of Kirkham, approximately 5 miles away which is served by a nearby motorway and main roads and has a dedicated officer assigned to the area. Kirkham is a small market town surrounded by rural areas.
2. A concern over the impact of this new store was what effect it could have on a small geographical policing area enjoying acceptable levels of crime and incidents. From enquiries into similar large scale stores in other parts of the country it became apparent that the potential problems were;
 - Increased demands on Police resources
 - An increase in levels of recorded crime
 - Impact on local and Divisional Policing Objectives.
6. Prior to the store opening two local residential beat officers set up a meeting with the store manager to address some of these issues and form a partnership to solving these foreseeable problems. The name of the project was to be called '**The B&Q Initiative**'
7. Following meetings with the management and security staff from the store a series of guidelines were agreed upon when dealing with shoplifters and other incidents. Officers from the geographical area would attend the store to familiarise the staff on procedures in conjunction with the security staff. As a result of the meetings a policy of 'deterring' potential shoplifters was introduced and implemented by the staff which was monitored by the two local officers during the implementational stage
8. The system was adopted by the store, which has proved to be highly successful, measured by the amount of potential crimes which have been intervened by the staff. In encouraging the deterrent of potential offenders staff at the store have been receiving small rewards and written recognition, which assists in their annual appraisals. Details of the offenders are recorded and they are in turn banned from the store.

Description of Project

1. Scanning.

In receipt of the information of the arrival and subsequent opening of the new superstore it was envisaged that the usual criminal offences associated with such a large outlet would begin and seriously impact on the sectional crime statistics making the divisional targets difficult to achieve. To effectively scan the potential problems, communication with other similar businesses including other B&Q stores were made, in particular another store in Warrington which had suffered over two hundred shoplifting incidents since 1998! Along with personal experiences by the two officers involved in the project it quickly became apparent that positive action was needed as the demands on policing would soon escalate and cause a dramatic increase in recorded crime levels.

2. Analysis

In order to address the issue two basic questions needed to be answered ;

- What do I need to know about this problem
- Who can provide an answer to the question

In deciding what is needed to know about the problem the application of the (PAT model) was used to analyse the problem. The questions regarding the problem included ;

- Location
- Victim
- Offender

The officers who had ownership of the problem analysed the problem in partnership with the relevant organisation (B & Q) and obtained relevant intelligence data using the force computer systems to assess the foreseeable

Examples of the techniques employed by the staff include ;

- Staff questioning customers on numbers of items at the checkout resulting in a noticeable difference!
- Checkout staff looking inside large items and finding further items being concealed and not being declared
- Checking of bar coded products particularly when codes become unreadable by the bar code reader. In one instance a check out operative suspected an inappropriate value for 5 pieces of coving shown to be £9.90, on confirming his suspicions the correct price was found to be £99. Had the checkout operative not questioned the price then £450 would have been lost.
- Positioning displays in prominent places to guide customers through the checkout tills in order to deter would be shoplifters.
- The placing of staff at exit and entry points to discourage offenders and welcome potential customers
- Once a person had been dissuaded from shoplifting the incident was recorded as a deter.

By adopting the (SMART) model the elements of each of the stages is achieved ie ;

- **Specific** - Targeted to reducing repeated calls and demands on police time.
- **Measureable** - By the amounts of offences already deterred by the records kept.
- **Achievable** - The project has been up and running and is showing sustainability
- **Realistic** - After setting up the operation it is now being adopted in other retail outlets.

■ **Timescale** -- Ongoing without police intervention

The responsibility for the training of the staff was undertaken by Mr Ward, assisted by the local officers and management.

Over a period of 5 months between August and December 1999 the following statistics were recorded ;

- f A total of 116 'Deters' were recorded
- Over £4000 of property was recovered

4. Assessment

The success of this venture has been achieved by the implementation of a pro-active approach to an anticipated problem deploying the minimum of police resources and has proved to be a sustainable solution after the removal of police involvement and in turn reduced the demands on operational policing.

The venture has been measurable by the amount of 'deters' in which the store has achieved during the 5 month period and is currently continuing without any timescale element being applied.

The anticipated increase in crime levels resulting from the potential offences being recorded at the store are illustrated in the graph (see appendix). It can be seen that given an average of 23 crimes over the period the impact on the area's crime figures range from 27%-54%.

The potential cost implication in the processing of offenders has been estimated at around £6000 which does not take into account the costs involved in custody and court times.

The reduction targets for the division during this period were set at 10% and had these additional figures been added to the existing totals then the geographical area would have

Chart1

Chart showing comparison of potential effect of extra crimes from B&Q on Geographical Crime Figures

