



SAFE AND SECURE

Digital safes streamline cash management tasks while enhancing security and accountability.

BY JERRY SOVERINSKY



Kalpesh Patek had a problem. As the sole owner of a Southern California gas station, his work was never ending—certainly far more than a full-time job. He faced a cascade of tasks each day, none more important than managing cash. But for the veteran fuel marketer, the cash management process had been fraught with challenges. Sure, he could tackle the chore himself, but as a multistore owner, he was like the proverbial worker bee in the midst of a nonstop buzz of activity who had to react to any number of problems that might arise each day—on site and off—making his availability

unpredictable at best. And cash management was a daily priority.

Delegating the task, though, carried its own challenges. His few employees were on the honor system and carried little accountability when transferring cash from the register drawer to the store’s “dumb” safe in a back room. Not to mention, the process for his streamlined operation took up valuable time—a scarce resource.

He prioritized finding a solution to automate the time-consuming manual cash management practices, one that would incorporate both security and accountability. “Ideally, the solution



This article is brought to you by **American Security**, a NACS member.



would allow me to manage all aspects of the cash we take in from a remote location, such as my off-site office,” he said. “This would free up more of my time each day and allow me to focus on my other businesses.”

After much searching, he joined an expanding group of retailers who have found help—and security—with a smart safe.

SAFE HANDS

“Smart safes have really grown with the convenience store industry in the past 10 years,” said Rony Ghaby, director of operations for SecTran Security Inc., a cash-in-transit (armored truck) company. “It’s the perfect solution for retail locations that handle cash.”

A smart safe automates many of the daily time-consuming cash management tasks, such as cash counting and transfers to a store safe. Additionally, it provides the transparency that time-strapped operators like Patek look for when overseeing operations, allowing them remote access to how much cash is handled daily—without fear of miscounts, counterfeits and internal theft. It’s quickly becoming the de facto solution for operators who need an improved cash management process.

“Patek is one of 200,000-plus smart safe owners now in the U.S.,” said Donny McKay, vice president of marketing and engineering for American Security, one of the longest-established U.S. custom safe manufacturers. With more than 75 years of experience designing and building high security safes for businesses and residences, American Security entered the smart safe business in 2013 with its CashWizard™ safe, the model that Patek chose for his stores.

The CashWizard safe hit all the key areas that Patek was looking to address, as well as a growing industry issue: shrink. “The smart safe market is critical to combating shrink, a problem for all businesses,” McKay said. “Smart safes help operators gain efficiency. It comes down to hours and accountability. Traditionally, when people take cash, they put it in the till, the till gets full, a

manager takes the money to a back office multiple times a day and then prepares a deposit at the end of the day. Now cashiers are putting the deposit directly into the Smart Safe.

SAFE BET

For The Halal Guys, a popular New York chain of 30 Middle Eastern restaurants, theft was a major concern of its existing cash management process. “Previously, our cash count was wrong, but we couldn’t determine why,” the company said. “Was it due to human error? Manager fatigue? Was someone stealing? Our traditional safe gave us zero cash management oversight.”

By transitioning to CashWizard, the restaurant eliminated the need for managers to count and verify bank deposits by hand, as well as sharply reduced the number of people who had access to the money on hand. We now have “heightened security and more hands-on, clear-cut visibility. The improved efficiency has saved time and money, and everyone likes that, including the investors.”

SAFE SPACE

Using a smart safe like CashWizard to manage cash management is streamlined, secure and efficient. Users log into the safe to activate its functionality, after which cash can be fed directly into it for processing. The unit reads and counts the currency, even flagging counterfeit notes.

Those figures are then transmitted wirelessly to the user’s bank, providing the retailer with nearly instantaneous access to the funds. “As long as a banking relationship is involved, the bank will provide the retailer with provisional credit based on a day’s worth of deposits,” Ghaby said. “For instance, if you deposit \$2,000 into the safe on a given day and midnight is configured as the end of day for your store, the safe will transmit a file that contains a breakdown of the funds that are in the safe to the bank. The bank will then review the file the next morning and put those funds into the retailer’s account to use.”

The bank is willing to provide the daily credit because of the reliability of the smart safe. “The



safes contain an internal validator that scans and counts bills,” Ghaby said. “It gives the bank assurances that the money is in the safe, which is secured from the customer. The only entity that can open the safe is an armored car company.”

For armored car companies like SecTran Security Inc., the smart safes have sharply reduced their retailer interactions while speeding access to cash. “Without smart safes, we might schedule three days per week service with a retailer,” Ghaby said. “We’d pick up their deposits and transport them to a bank of choice. But smart safes have reduced the necessary frequency to maybe one or two days per week. That increases efficiency for the retailers, allowing them to do other things. At the same time, the revenue is the same.”

If the process sounds too good to be true, for those unaware of the technology, it’s simply a matter of education. “Resistance from retailers is less and less,” said Gaby Widenor, head of business development for Cash Connect, which manages back-end support for smart safes, including the armored carriers that service them. “This is growing 45% per year, because the merchant sees an opportunity to digitize cash and get same-day access to their bank account.”

SHRINKING SHRINK

Smart safes help reduce retail shrink—a growing problem for retailers, said Donny McKay, vice president of marketing and engineering for American Security. “Employee theft is a huge threat that can undermine the profitability of a business. By taking proactive actions and having the right training and systems in place, such as a smart safe, retailers can help reduce their overall annual shrinkage by a large margin.”

According to the National Retail Federation, store shrink in the U.S. totaled \$61.7 billion in 2019, more than a 20% jump from 2018 (\$50.6 billion). Employee theft constitutes a growing problem, with retailers apprehending 560 employee thefts annually.

SAFE SIDE


With most smart safes, retailers can also access a robust online dashboard that provides complete transparency of all transactions, with rich, detailed reports that can be used for tax reporting, too.

“The entire process is automated and precise, eliminating potential bank charges that are associated with miscounts,” McKay said. “As a result, it provides complete transparency and accountability.”

“My employees love the safe,” Kalpesh remarked. “Nobody likes to count cash, and the CashWizard Smart Safe helps automate a good portion of their job. With the Tube Vend Dispenser solution, they can dispense their own change directly from the safe. This allows a single person to run the entire gas station and a convenience store without the need for a manager or myself to be on-premises.”

SAFE HOUSE

In addition to American Security, there are several high-profile vendors that offer smart safes and smart safe solutions. As you consider your options, you may find it helpful to distinguish their capabilities and standards. “Look carefully at the construction and security features,” McKay said. “What is the thickness of the steel? What is the hardness of the steel? Are there anti-pry features or dead latch locks? Does the safe tie into your burglary system? There are big differences in how safes are constructed, and this is critical when deciding on which one to put in your operation.”

Whichever solution you settle on, you’re likely to see an immediate improvement in store efficiency and cash flow, two key components to operational success. “Times are changing; it’s important to future-proof your business,” McKay said. “Smart safes can help.” 



Jerry Soverinsky is a freelance writer and NACS Magazine contributing writer. See his work at www.jerrysoverinsky.com.