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Inside A.C. Moore's LP Audit Overhaul

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A new automated compliance audit management tool helped A.C. Moore shave nearly two hours from its audit process.

Arts and crafts superstore A.C. Moore operates 140 stores on the East Coast. Steven Werner, director of loss prevention, explains that a 140-store audit process can be laborious and cumbersome if it is done manually. When Werner joined the A.C. Moore team nearly two years ago, the specialty retailer relied on a paper-based audit process that lacked the flexibility necessary to benefit the entire organization. In order to maintain compliance and reduce shrink, Werner set out to find an automated solution that would streamline the entire audit process.



When Werner joined A.C. Moore, the LP team relied on one audit, “the loss prevention audit,” for both loss prevention and in-store operations. “It was the exact same audit,” laments Werner. “It lacked flexibility; we couldn’t separate the scores, and we couldn’t separate an LP audit from an operations audit.” Werner also explains that his team had no administrative rights to the audits. His team had to work with a third-party company to make any kind of changes.

Automated Audit Tool Saves Time, Boosts Operational Efficiencies

Werner’s team consists of eight LP professionals, and they conduct two full audits in each store every year. The audit was 14 pages filled with various questions on everything from LP, security, and safety, to customer satisfaction, and it took 12 hours to complete. When a store receives a score of 85 or lower, it is considered noncompliant, and it must be re-audited within 45 days of the original audit date. “Full-scale audits are conducted 280 times a year, and if 50 percent of those stores need to be re-audited our LP teams may conduct anywhere from 400 to 420 audits per year,” states Werner.

The audit process did not end when the last question was answered. After the LP person conducted the audit, they would return to their hotel room, home, office, etc. and enter the data into a website. That process alone could take up to two hours. “Not only was the entire data entry process a drain on my team’s time, I wanted the data to be available in real time while the audit was being conducted,” says Werner.

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Steve Werner, director of loss prevention, A.C. Moore



Frustrated with the retailer’s existing paper-based, cumbersome audit process, Werner conducted his own research, and as a result, he contacted LP Software about its Compliance Audit Management System (CAMS). After learning more about the product’s capabilities, Werner and his team chose to implement CAMS, which allows them to create their own audits, questions, and scoring. CAMS includes automatic emailing to store, district, and regional managers combined with built-in reports that provide real-time and historical analysis of audit data. It also allows users to take pictures, which auditors can use to supplement the audit. Auditors can use the CAMS client on their laptops or mobile devices to perform audits and download the results. This eliminates the need to record scores on spreadsheets or on paper and having someone at corporate compile the results manually. Werner explains that he replaced his team’s laptops with Microsoft Surface tablets for easier use in the field. “We selected CAMS because of its ease of use, administrator ability to change and modify audit criteria, and its Web-based functions,” explains Werner. “This will allow our field LP team to complete audits from a tablet, increasing field productivity.” Werner reports his team saves two hours per audit as a result of the CAMS implementation.

Technology Road Map: Case Management

Based on A.C. Moore’s success with CAMS, the retailer is in the process of implementing Loss Prevention Management System (LPMS) from LP Software. LPMS is a case management system used to create electronic case records quickly and accurately to improve the management of information regarding almost any type of incident. LPMS is a paperless case file, including details such as suspects, items taken, detailed report narratives, people involved, vehicles, attachments (video, statements, audio, etc.), and advanced case linking to identify relationships between the records.

Werner explains that his team has benefited from the CAMS implementation, as the tool has streamlined the entire audit process, because it is automated and user-friendly. “In today’s day and age, LP is not about ‘gotcha,’” explains Werner. “LP has evolved into being business partners with the rest of the organization. I believe we needed to give the stores the tools necessary to pass our audits, because we want them to be compliant every day. We don’t want them to be in compliance only on the days when the LP person’s coming to the store to conduct the audit. And CAMS helps us do that.” Indeed, the CAMS system has been expanded to other departments within A.C. Moore. District managers as well as each store complete their monthly compliance worksheets via the CAMS system.

Finally, Werner explains that shrink reduction is one of A.C. Moore’s primary goals, but that there is no one surefire way to reduce shrink. “CAMS is part of our shrink reduction process,” says Werner.