



## BRIEFING

# Brickstream expands tracking offer

Retek's Brickstream customer tracking offer now includes a service-level dimension, reports Penelope Ody

Systems for counting and monitoring shopper movements have been around for some time. Five years ago, companies including Schedule Works (now part of Torex Retail), FootFall and NCR were offering video-based systems that could track customers through the store to identify hot spots, while NCR had a system that added face recognition to the mix to identify individual movements.

Atlanta-based company Brickstream has developed a similar system, which also uses computer-controlled video cameras to identify shoppers and trace their movements. Retek has recently acquired the retail rights to this product.

But Brickstream does more than just identify hot-spots or the time shoppers spend staring at particular promotions. Where it really becomes useful is in the management reports that Retek has added for the retail sector.

These include the predictable dwell maps to identify hot spots and marketing tools, such as the interest shoppers show in specific promotional displays. There is also a service-level report that monitors queue length.



**Electronic eye: Brickstream can trace shopper movements as well as identifying service level problems**

Customer service is fast becoming one of retailing's key performance metrics, but it can be a difficult one to measure. Queue length is already one of the more widely-used measures, with retailers such as Tesco introducing routines to monitor queue lengths regularly. When a light flashes at the checkout the operator simply keys in the number of shoppers waiting at her till – a quick and simple data collection process that can give a valuable indication of customer satisfaction levels.

With the Brickstream system, queue lengths can not only be measured, but

when they reach unacceptable levels – maybe more than two people waiting in any line – an automatic trigger can alert supervisors to open more cash points.

The same information can also be relayed to central systems to alert head office staff of falling performance levels in branches, as an additional control.

Brickstream is already being used in the US by both Target and Best Buy for service-level monitoring. Best Buy is using it to help design more efficient queuing systems and improve traffic flows, while Target is using the metrics

it provides for staff incentive schemes.

Also new at Retail Solutions 2002 last month, was a heat-seeking, people counter from Irisys. The new unit – which replaces a rather bulky camera-like gadget – looks just like a domestic smoke alarm. Up to 30 counters can be networked to count both moving shoppers and stationary ones – as in queues. This information can then be similarly used in service-level monitoring, as well as for more basic functions, such as counting shoppers in a particular area.

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