Case Study: Football Tickets with PTEC from H.W. Sands Corp.

Introduction

This case study examines how football clubs successfully employed PTEC security labels to help them win their battle against forged football game tickets. Similar actions were taken by the organizers of other types of events for which entry tickets are sold, such as golf events and open concerts.

Since football tickets are often quite expensive, the production and sale of fake tickets can be lucrative for professional counterfeiters. For this reason, the forging of tickets was widespread before PTEC security labels were used to prevent it. The forgery caused significant financial losses to the football clubs. In addition, it led to overcrowding in the stadiums. Not only did the overcrowding interfere with fans' enjoyment of the games, it also caused security and safety problems.
Note: This case study discusses the use of PTEC security technology to prevent the forgery of individual game tickets. Season tickets to a series of games (usually with reserved seats) are physically similar to ID cards and are discussed in another case study.

Overview of the Problem

Buyers can purchase individual football tickets in one of two ways: from approved sellers, such as off-site ticket offices, or from a *speculator*. Speculators are unauthorized sellers who purchase game tickets from approved sellers well in advance of the game and sell them later for inflated prices. Sales of tickets by speculators normally take place either outside the stadium just before the game is played or via the internet.
In the case under discussion here, professional forgers produced fake tickets for popular football games on a regular basis. The fake tickets were often of good enough quality that the stadium gatekeepers thought they were genuine and allowed their bearers to enter the stadium.

The forgers sold the tickets using *pushers* - sellers who appeared to be legitimate, if unapproved, speculators. Like speculators, the pushers sold the forged tickets to fans near the stadium itself or via the internet. In most cases, the purchasers were unaware that the tickets they bought were faked.

Initial Attempts to Find a Solution

In their initial attempts to solve the ticket forgery problem, the clubs tried out a number of ticket-production methods they hoped would make it impossible for counterfeiters to create convincing copies of their game tickets. In addition to several special printing techniques, they tried adding distinctive components, such as holograms or infrared and ultraviolet elements, to the tickets.

While each of these methods was helpful for a limited period of time, none was effective in the long term. Forgers consistently managed to produce accurate versions of the tickets within a short while.
When all of these methods were shown to be ineffective on their own, the clubs tried adding an additional obstacle: they only issued their tickets very close to the game date. The tickets themselves contained distinctive elements such as holograms. By issuing them close to the game date, they limited the time available to counterfeiters for producing fake versions of the tickets.

This combined solution was successful at reducing the number of fake tickets, but the short ticket distribution period created logistical problems for the clubs. In particular, fans who wanted to buy tickets in advance were forced to wait in long and frustrating lines.

H.W. Sands Corp. PTEC Security Solution

In 1999, pressure-sensitive labels were introduced to the football association (IFA). It was recommended to add these labels to the tickets issued by all of the football clubs in the association. Like all PTEC security products, these labels contain latent images. The images are invisible to the naked eye, but readily visible when viewed through a standard polarized lens.

We recommended placing the labels in one of two locations: on the ticket stub or across the perforation between the main part of the ticket and the stub. Because gatekeepers tear off and retain the ticket stub when a ticket is used to enter the stadium, both of these options would prevent ticket bearers from pealing the labels and transferring them to forged tickets for the same or other games. When the label is entirely on the stub, it is simply taken away from the ticket bearer at the gate. If the
label is placed across the ticket's perforation, the label tears along its own perforation when the gatekeeper tears the stub off the ticket.
The IFA decided to try out the PTEC security solution. In the clubs that used the PTEC security labels, the problem of fake tickets being mistakenly accepted by stadium gatekeepers **disappeared completely**.

At present, almost all of the football clubs in the country use the PTEC security solution on their tickets. Counterfeiters have consistently failed to produce fake tickets that cannot be identified easily by stadium attendants. They have at times produced tickets with round, silver labels on them that look like genuine labels, but these labels had no latent image on them and so were easily spotted at the gates.

Benefits of the PTEC Security Solution

PTEC security labels have brought a number of significant benefits to the football clubs using them.

Increased Revenues

Because all the revenues from ticket sales now reach the football clubs - and none are siphoned off by forgers - the clubs have increased their revenues significantly. Clubs using PTEC security labels reported 10-30% increases in revenues from ticket sales when they began using the labels.

No Stadium Overcrowding

When fake tickets are accepted at the stadium gate, a single seat can be assigned to more than one person. This leads to overcrowded stadiums and fights over seating. When PTEC security labels were used, overcrowding problems of this sort disappeared completely.

Improved Logistics

Because PTEC security labels cannot be faked by counterfeiters even when they have plenty of time to work on them, the clubs using these labels can issue the tickets at the earliest possible date. This makes smoother and better logistics possible, which ultimately results in more satisfied customers.

Implementation

The implementation in this case was relatively simple. Once the IFA decided to use the PTEC security solution, the required labels were quickly produced. We even took care of applying the labels to the tickets. Polarized lenses were distributed to the gatekeepers, who were ready to use them after a short demonstration.

Conclusions

The case described here is another classic case of a professional and amateur counterfeiter attack. Some of the fake tickets were of very good quality and it was difficult to differentiate between them and the original ones. As a result, the counterfeiters were able to sell the tickets and make significant profits at the clubs' expense.

The solution provided by PTEC security materials application brought the problem to an immediate end. Even the most skilled forgers were unable to make good-quality fake tickets.

This case demonstrates some of the major benefits of PTEC security technology:

- PTEC security labels are nearly impossible to fake, even by sophisticated counterfeiters.
- PTEC security solutions are, in many cases, very simple to implement. No sophisticated authentication or tracking means are needed.
- The PTEC authentication device is a low-cost polarizer. As a result, authentication devices can be distributed in large quantities, making immediate, large scale implementation feasible.
- The PTEC authentication method is easy to understand and explain. This makes it simple to implement on large scales. It also makes it simple to show the customer the "problem" with his ticket, which prevents unnecessary conflicts with unsatisfied customers.
- The PTEC security solution is 100% safe and allows organizations to give great service without relying on expensive, real-time, computerized databases.