



Adrian Simmons and Jacob Scherf, co-founders of Total Brand Security

Total security

Institutional financing and an impressive variety of products have enabled UK-based Total Brand Security to expand globally and corner a large part of the ever-growing brand security sector.

James Quirk reports

Brand fraud is a rapidly growing problem. Fake goods infiltrate markets around the world in everything from cosmetics to pharmaceuticals, from designer clothes to wines and spirits. In the US, the FBI estimates that American companies lose up to \$250 billion every year due to counterfeit goods, while the European Community believes fake goods are responsible for the loss of 100,000 jobs in Europe each year.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the brand security sector is developing an increasingly wide range of solutions to protect against counterfeit goods. Total Brand Security is one company that has benefited from increased institutional financial support to do just this.

CEO Jacob Scherf and managing director Adrian Simmons founded Total Brand Security (TBS) in 2003, after having run the European and Asian business for Westvaco Brand Security – a subsidiary of US-based packaging group MeadWestvaco.

‘Counterfeiting crime is getting worse and worse,’ says Simmons. ‘The secret is staying one step ahead of the fraudsters, which is a challenge. As soon as we develop technology to protect one particular brand, another more sophisticated method to get round the security appears or a new brand is attacked.’

To combat this problem, Total Brand Security looks continuously to create new anti-counterfeit technology. The company now boasts around 20 different security solutions, and

“It helps if it is gimmicky: people like that. You have to get the end user involved”

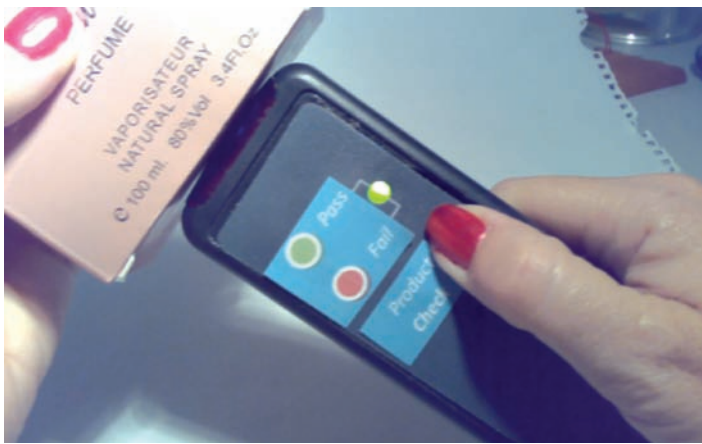
ten varieties of authenticating readers, while 40 percent of its turnover is put straight back into development.

‘The key in brand security is for it to be multi-layered,’ states Simmons. ‘It has to evolve continuously.’ He cites the example of the UK bank note, which has no less than 43 different levels of security.

Total Brand Security is most active in the wine and spirits sector, where it protects, among other brands, around 55 percent of all Cognac worldwide. Consumer electronics, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and document security are also important areas.

With its headquarters in London, the company also has offices in Singapore, Tokyo and Shanghai. A grant of \$250,000 last year from The Capital Fund, a venture capital fund that invests in fast-growing companies in the Greater London area, was used to help the expansion into Asia.

‘In many ways, the market is still embryonic,’ says Simmons of the brand security sector. ‘Many people are just playing



“It’s very hard to put a cash value on a brand. In many cases we need to develop awareness of the value that needs to be protected”

around. The big brands get calls every day from someone who says they have a new great product, but they know that we have a wide range, and that’s an advantage.’

In an environment where staying one step ahead of the counterfeiters is crucial at all times, the variety of security solutions that Total Brand Security employs has been fundamental to its success.

The company favors end-user authentication – whereby the consumer of the product is the one who can determine if what he or she is buying is genuine. ‘End-user authentication is the holy grail of our sector,’ says Simmons. ‘The reader must be cheap and subtle, and ideally also can be used for something else. It helps if it is gimmicky: people like that. You have to get the end user involved.’

The company’s UV/IR (ultraviolet infra-red) Detection and Authentication system is one that necessitates such a reader. With TBS’ contactless handheld detector, the consumer can visibly verify the authenticity of a product containing different embedded identifying marks, which are read by different parts of the detector. Like nearly 50 percent of the company’s technologies, the system can be applied to a label and printed using all standard processes.

‘In this case the reader doubles as a pen,’ says Simmons. ‘The reader also has two points, so is also multi-layered.’

The technology that the company produced for various leading cognac brands is temperature-sensitive label that changes color when exposed to heat to reveal a hidden image. In keeping with TBS’ philosophy of multi-layered security, two different parts of the bottle’s label can be authenticated.

‘It’s a high-security color change label,’ says Simmons. ‘It can be authenticated by a lighter, which makes it great for bars.’ The ink has even been adjusted to withstand the higher temperatures of Asia for applications in that region.

The company is a member of the Naginels consortium – a group of companies and universities sponsored by the European Community’s Craft program to develop the Naginels System, which uses laser technology

to enable very fine etching of security data onto plastic or glass surfaces. A 0.5x0.5mm mark that is invisible to the naked eye can be engraved in under a second.

Applications include fragrance bottles and pharmaceutical products, and TBS displayed the technology for the first time at the Pharma Secure Chain in London at the end of last year. The company received a grant of 1.2 million euros from the EC for this single development.

Simmons reports that more and more brand owners want to have authentication through the package – particularly in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and electronic components. Because of the high margins in these types of products, counterfeiters will often either remove the original product and place it in fake packaging, or take the original packaging and insert a counterfeit product, allowing them to double the volumes of their original shipment.

The problem here, says Simmons, is that it is not easy to mark the primary package in a cost-effective way – with solutions such as RFID or EAS tags being typically removable, visible, or too expensive.

To combat this, Total Brand Security developed an authentication technology – NLS (non line of sight) – which is almost invisible, and often irremovable, from the primary packaging. It uses robust security taggants, which cannot be demagnetized or deactivated, that can be integrated into inks, adhesives, plastic components, or holograms.

Other technologies that the company has developed include the TBS Track & Trace System which can be incorporated into visible/invisible inkjet, a variety of security labels as well as security sleeves. This is a numbering system built for maximum security using special encryption that does not allow reverse engineering. A consumer, custom official or investigator can verify whether the product is authentic by logging on online or through SMS anywhere in the world.

Part of Total Brand Security’s aim is to help companies become fully aware of the value of their brand. ‘It’s very hard to put a cash value on a brand,’ says Simmons, ‘and in many cases we need to develop awareness of the value that needs to be protected.’ ■