



# Combating Organized Retail Crime at Its Source

Over the last twenty years the retail industry has been in a constant uphill battle to remain profitable. From online resellers to social media, it is now easier than ever to make purchases without leaving your own Facebook app. Online resellers that used to be limited to eBay and Craigslist have expanded into new and more mobile-friendly platforms. Besides changing the way consumers shop for goods, these online marketplaces have changed the way thieves steal and resell merchandise. The days of selling stolen watches from the inside of a trench coat are gone. Thieves are now an organized team skilled in exploiting the Internet for their own profit.

For the first time ever, 100 percent of companies participating in the National Retail Federation's (NRF) 2016 Loss Prevention Survey reported being a victim of organized retail crime (ORC). According to the same survey, ORC costs the retail industry over \$30 billion a year. The popularity of e-commerce, social media, and marketplace seller sites has had a considerable impact on the way goods are bought and sold, as well as the significant rise in ORC theft. One organization that is combating this problem at its source is The Zelman Group.

## Open-Source Intelligence and ORC Investigations

The Zelman Group recently launched an Open-Source ORC Investigation service. Combined with their ORC Recovery division, The Zelman Group now provides an end-to-end solution to retailers for their ORC needs. The Zelman Group recognizes how difficult it is for current loss prevention senior leadership to balance combatting ORC theft and the ROI on a full-fledged ORC team. By providing an end-to-end solution, The Zelman Group can help shift this balance. The Zelman Group has the capacity to identify, investigate, and resolve ORC thefts of all sizes. The Open-Source program consists of online research to gather information from e-commerce communities, classifieds, social networks, Dark Web, and criminal data to identify the core of ORC rings. Once the criminal enterprise is identified, The Zelman Group ORC investigations specialists combine cutting-edge forensic with proven investigative techniques, high-level law enforcement contacts, and financial recovery solutions. The Zelman Group's service is designed to assist retailers at every step of their investigative process.



The Zelman Group ORC team is led by Ben Dugan as the Director of ORC Field Investigations, and Bill Ramos as the Director of ORC Recovery. Dugan has more than ten years of ORC field investigations experience and is a well-known expert and speaker in the industry. Ramos has more than thirty years of investigation and recovery experience with extensive background leading major investigations and recovery efforts for high-end retailers throughout the US. CEO Stuart Levine; VP of Operations Lauren Bridgeo; and Chief Counsel Michael Ira Asen, who is a criminal attorney, provide additional support and expertise. Each member of this team has more than thirty years of retail, e-commerce, and investigative experience.

## Twenty Years of Innovation

The Zelman Group is celebrating its twentieth birthday this December. Since its founding in 1997, The Zelman Group has embodied the phrase "the only constant is change." From its start as an employee-screening company

to the multiservice loss prevention organization it is today, The Zelman Group is always evolving with the needs of the loss prevention community. This being said, it is no surprise that The Zelman Group would tackle ORC head on.

"The ORC problem in this country is continuing to grow every year, but the resources dedicated to the fight are shrinking," said Levine. "Unlike standard retail loss prevention efforts that can be easily justified with lower shrink, an ORC team ROI is more difficult to prove. While many ORC teams document tens of millions of dollars in admissions, very few can offset program expenses with recovery like we can."

The Zelman Group, LLC, based in Greenvale, New York, is a loss prevention services and consulting company working in the retail, food service, and hospitality industries.

Visit The Zelman Group's Open-Source Intelligence and ORC Investigations team at NRF PROTECT (booth 601) in Washington, DC, in June. For more information, please visit [zellmangroup.com](http://zellmangroup.com). ■

