

1 Problem

What	Problem(s)	1.6 million Americans had a handheld device stolen last year in 2012 in the US
When	Date	Ongoing
	Different, unusual, unique	Smart phones are increasing in popularity, demand is very high
Where	Facility, site	Throughout US
	Unit, area, equipment	Smartphones
Impact to the Goals		
	Safety	Potential safety risk to targets of theft
	Customer Service	Customers are concerned about risk of theft
	Property/ Equipment	>1 million smart phones stolen in US in 2012
	Economic	Replacing smartphone can be substantial cost
	Labor/ Time	Time and effort involved in replacing a phone
	Frequency	This incident: 1.6 million handheld device stolen in 2012 in US Annualized Cost: >\$30 billion

Can the Epidemic of Smartphone Thefts be Stopped?

About 1.6 million handheld devices were stolen in the United States in 2012, the majority of which were smartphones. In fact, the frequency at which the popular Apple devices are taken has given rise to a whole new term, "apple picking". Stolen smartphones cost consumers nearly \$30 billion a year. These thefts affect a significant number of smartphone owners with approximately 10 percent reporting that they have had a device stolen.

Cause Mapping is a Root Cause Analysis method that captures basic cause-and-effect relationships supported with evidence.

CAUSE MAPPING

Problem Solving • Incident Investigation • Root Cause Analysis

- Step 1 Problem** - What's the Problem?
- Step 2 Analysis** - Why did it happen?
- Step 3 Solutions** - What will be done?

3 Solutions

One of the possible solutions suggested to reduce the number of smartphone thefts is to include a kill switch in smartphone software. This kill switch would essentially make the phone worthless because it would no longer function no matter where it was in the world. If smartphones no longer have resale value, then there would be little incentive to steal them and the number of thefts should dramatically decrease. While this idea is elegant in its simplicity, like most things there is more that needs to be considered.

The addition of a kill switch was recently rejected by cellphone carriers because of concerns about hacking and problems with reactivation. If hackers found a way to flip the kill switches they would have the ability to destroy a huge number of smartphones from anywhere in the world. Depending on how many users were targeted this could have a huge impact, which could be especially problematic for people who use their phones in an official capacity like law enforcement. It doesn't take much imagination to see how this scenario could go horribly wrong. The proposed kill switch is also permanent so users won't be able to reactivate their phones and any stolen phones that were recovered would be useless. Companies continue to work on a number of ideas to make it more difficult to resell smartphones, but there isn't general agreement on the best approach yet.

2 Analysis

