

Date of Record: May 7, 2013

Purpose

Business crime costs the U.S. economy at least \$185 billion annually according to the American Crime Prevention Institute (ACPI). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that 30% of all business failures are due in part, to employee theft. It is believed that goods and services are priced 15% higher to make up for the expected loss of a business due to theft. ACPI estimates internal theft costs businesses over \$40 billion annually. These are just a few reasons why commercial and retail losses should be a huge concern for everyone.

Internal Theft

According to the American Crime Prevention Institute, employees represent the number one criminal occurrence threat to businesses. Businesses attempt to hire quality employees who they hope will not be prone to internal theft. Businesses then put safe-guards in place to help deter employees from committing crimes against their employer. Despite these efforts, there are no guarantees. A balanced approach is needed, and business leaders must remain vigilant by reviewing their procedures and understanding their vulnerabilities. Do not underestimate the creativity and boldness of some employees.

The number one factor in reducing internal employee related theft has to do with hiring quality employees whom you can trust. Here are some additional suggestions.

- Conduct a crafted interview by someone skilled in the art of interviewing.
- Consider conducting a background check. The amount of responsibility relevant to the employee's position may dictate the depth or expense of this process. Check a person's County Court Records on-line at <http://www.tippecanoe.in.gov/> . It's free.
- Check references and verify work history.
- Consider drug screens as a part of the employment process.
- Have a well written policy handbook to document organizational rules and practices.
- Use a system of checks and balances so no one employee is in total control of any one area.
- Keep certain duties separate.
- Control and monitor bank statements and other financial instruments.
- Conduct regular audits of finances, inventory, and even intellectual property rights.
- Have detailed and controlled receiving, handling, and shipping procedures in place.

Shoplifting

Shoplifting is one of the most prevalent crimes committed in America. We see shoplifters represented in every age group and income level. Even people who have the money to pay for items they steal, still commit this crime. We see amateurs commit shoplifting, and we also see shoplifting committed by individuals or small groups who we consider professional shoplifters.

Some people steal out of a perceived necessity. They might feel shoplifting is the only way

they can acquire basic survival needs like food or clothing. Some people will justify the crime by thinking that the business owes them something extra. Some thefts are committed as a means to support a drug habit. Other people tell us they steal for the thrill or irresistible impulse that is derived from the act itself. Understanding the reasons or thoughts behind the act of shoplifting may help a business manager put the necessary barriers in place to reduce victimization. Here are some suggestions to consider.

- Have the proper staffing in place. This allows a business to place employees in vulnerable areas like fitting rooms, and entrances where customers should be greeted upon entering.
- Have an audible device that activates when someone opens the door to the business.
- Train staff to recognize shoplifting prevention techniques and what to do when it happens.
- Use mirrors or CCTV to your advantage, to help monitor an individual's activity.
- Post notices of a zero tolerance shoplifting policy and strictly enforce it.
- Keep valuable merchandise away from the front of the business to prevent a grab-and-run.
- Lock expensive items in a display case, or display those items behind the cash register.
- Keep shelving aisles low and parallel for good visibility. Elevate the cash register if possible.
- Use Electronic Article Surveillance systems or embedded sensors when necessary.
- Watch for price switching or other merchandise alterations.
- Watch for accomplices who might distract an employee while a crime is committed.

We recognize that some businesses do not want their employees confronting or taking action against a shoplifter. If you call the police for assistance, we hope you can then be a good witness. Please provide detailed information to the police about the suspect's description, what merchandise was stolen and how, and where the suspect is at any given time. The more detail you can provide, the better chance we have of a successful apprehension and prosecution.

If your business would like to have an officer come to your business and speak about shoplifting or internal thefts, please contact us at 765-807-1200. We also encourage businesses to work with one another and communicate strategies that are mutually beneficial. You may find additional resources at the local Chamber of Commerce at <http://www.lafayettechamber.com/> or by calling 765-742-4041.

The Lafayette Police Department's Crime Prevention efforts are meant to strengthen the partnership between our members, and the community that we serve. We hope that together, we can make our community safer.