



# DEALING WITH THEFT

## DON'T CONFRONT THIEVES ON YOUR STAFF, JUST GET THEM OUT

The following is based on an actual recent situation involving a client and friend. "Ever since our lease started, we have been having problems with the alarm system and things have been getting worse. I have multiple police reports regarding items that were stolen from the building and the alarm did not sound and have also received multiple invoices from the police department regarding false alarms.

"On a recent morning, we arrived at our building and found that items totaling \$2,100.00 were stolen. We contacted the alarm company to try and figure out what happened. When they arrived, they stated that the option to track codes being entered to activate and deactivate the system was not enabled and therefore we could not determine what time and how the theft occurred.

"They also stated that the burglar alarm was tied in with the fire alarm and that it would be better if they were separate so that they could track our system easier. Finally, they said it might be a good idea to change codes for different employees to track their entries and perhaps change some other options with the system.

"We are now at 16 false alarms. We were contacted by the police sergeant and told that if this issue was not fixed that they would terminate our alarm account. For the past week we have not turned on the alarm due to the fact that every morning it goes off despite us using the proper alarm activation/deactivation procedures. We do not want to get in trouble with the police, but we cannot afford to leave the system deactivated. We have a lot of expensive merchandise.

"We need to identify who is responsible for the theft, eliminate the false alarms and determine whether it is the alarm company, insurance or the landlord's responsibility. Please get in touch with us as soon as possible regarding this matter."

It's clear that there are multiple things going on. Let's tackle them all.

The previous tenant had the space filled to capacity with millions of dollars of highly desirable new automobile parts and never lost anything. None of the previous tenants over the last 20-plus years have ever had a reportable loss. Same for all the other tenants in the building.

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PHOTO: IGGY1965

START WITH ACCURATE LANDS AND ANGLES.  
START WITH CONSISTENCY AND UNRIVALED SPEEDS.  
START WITH NO SPARKS AND A SMOOTH FINISH.  
START WITH GETTING IT RIGHT, EVERY TIME.

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## YOU WANT TO GET THE BAD APPLES OUT WITHOUT DIRECTLY CONFRONTING THEM . . . JUST GET THEM OUT AND KEEP THE HONEST PEOPLE HONEST.

### SET TRAPS

What I would advise as a first step is put something desirable (like a cordless tool, titanium hammer or other high value item) in a location in the building where the employees can readily see it. In fishing, one would call this "bait." You or your manager then puts the item back into the original box at the end of the day. When no one is watching, take it out, put in a brick or rock of about the same weight along with a note, "We know who you are, we know what you have been doing, don't come back." Obviously this same procedure would work if you found something in the dumpster or hidden behind the building.

There are many variations on this idea, but the objective is let the perpetrators announce themselves and get them off your payroll. It's also a great idea to meet your truck drivers at one of their stops and ride with them for a while. After the small talk, ask them, 'Is there is anything we

need to know about?' Don't ask for names, only something to watch out for. If there is internal theft then usually the drivers either know about it or are in on it. Either way, by putting them on notice, privately in their "office," you can gauge their reaction or gain their confidence regarding confidentiality.

### ELIMINATE FALSE ALARMS

False alarms that cause the system to be shut down are indeed one way that the thieves make things easier the next time. New or old, a new system that exhibits unsolvable problems may be sabotaged by anyone who has access to the building. If there are any more false alarms or problems alarming the system, then there is a high probability that an internal theft problem has not been cured. If one individual is always having the problems and no one else is involved, you may identify the perpetrator. No one says that thieves are smart.

That takes care of the internal situation. As for the alarm, it's time to update it to a more modern system and break it loose from the fire alarm system. Have a local security company or the company that handles the fire alarm system propose new equipment that is compatible with their monitoring protocols. Send the proposal to your landlord and split the expense.

Be sure that whatever is installed will track the timing and employee name, not just separate alarm codes. The idea is to make it more difficult for the thieves to stay anonymous. If there is an inexpensive biometric option, get that too.

### BE VIGILANT

In addition, get into the habit of riding past the building at odd hours to make sure nothing funny is going on. It is vital that you always make all of your personnel aware of any losses so they, too, become part of the solution. Until this situation is resolved, you personally should be the point of contact regarding anyone who is authorized to be on premises at an unusual time. You might also want to be standing with the individual who turns off the system first thing in the morning.

### REMOVE THE BAD APPLES

One really important point when dealing with employee theft is that you want to get the bad apples out without directly confronting them. Unless you are trained in law enforcement, know how to conform to strict rules of evidence and are prepared to prosecute, then never confront the perpetrators. Just get them out and keep the honest people honest. **CS**

STAFDA showroom and warehouse consultant Robert B. Footlik, PE, is CEO of Footlik & Associates, LLC, Evanston, Ill. He is a licensed professional engineer in the U.S. and abroad, who graduated from the Illinois Institute of Technology as an Industrial Engineer, and has worked extensively in the fields of materials handling, plant layout, packaging and management systems throughout the world. He is STAFDA's showroom and warehouse consultant and writes STAFDA's Warehouse Advisory. He can be reached by e-mail at [robert@footlik.com](mailto:robert@footlik.com) and via the website [www.footlik.com](http://www.footlik.com).



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