

## Solving Workplace Challenges Tools, Resources Available for Employers

By Brian Bauer

*(Editor's Note: This is the second of a two-part series)*

**E**mployers – burdened by the stress of dealing with issues ranging from fraud and theft to substance abuse and violence – can rest a bit easier.

Help is out there; think of it as an EAP (employee assistance program) for your company.

And, not unlike most of those programs, the “help” that’s available comes from professional consultants, whose special training and expertise can make it easier to get a handle on the situation before it gets out of control. A good example of the “help” that’s out there involves the use of corporate investigation firms.

Staffed by professional investigators, legal professionals and distinguished former members of the law enforcement community, corporate investigation firms assist companies – large and small – with the headaches that, according to the latest figures, explain why one out of three businesses forced to close its doors does so because of problems such as employee theft and drug issues.

To start with, employers need to overcome the notion that problems only exist at “other” companies. There are three areas employers, with the help of an investigative firm, can address to head off problems down the road:

- Conducting adequate background checks and interviews
- Performing a loss prevention or security “audit” as a way to accurately assess how well your company is doing to protect itself from problems
- Implementing a loss prevention program and educating employees about developing policies regarding theft deterrence, drugs in the workplace, sexual harassment, violence, etc.

### Background checks

Once an employee is hired, their past is often tucked away in a file cabinet. Unfortunately, that’s part of the problem. The information contained in most public databases – such as those maintained by local and state law enforcement agencies – is accurate, but it’s not the type of information that is shared between different localities. As a result, an employer may be unaware that the person he or she just hired has a criminal conviction on their record in another state, a suspended drivers’ license, falsified academic records or is not licensed for their specific trade.

Conducting a background check, using various databases, is relatively inexpensive. For a few dollars more, corporate investigative firms can provide an employer with access to a number of proprietary databases in which the exchange of information is much greater. As a result, employers are able to gain a much better picture into a person’s background. In the end, it can protect a company from financial losses, as well as a drop in productivity or unnecessary work-related injuries. Corporate investigative firms can also be contracted to conduct systematic, efficient interviews on behalf of a company.

### Security audits

Another tool in avoiding problems involves the use of a loss prevention or security audit as a way to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a company’s current policies. Conducting these types of audits often reveals how a company might better utilize its existing resources. It’s a good idea to conduct these types of audits on an annual basis as a way to keep up on the latest workplace-related issues.

Most audits can be conducted on an internal or external basis, depending on how well a company’s security department is staffed or trained. Using an outside firm can sometimes provide a company with a perspective or viewpoint that’s unbiased with regard to the company’s procedures or its “culture.”

### Value of deterrence

All too often, we hear about companies that have to pick up the pieces after a sometimes-tragic incident. Not surprisingly, these sorts of problems cause a company to be “reactive” in how they respond. As a result, important details are sometimes overlooked.

To avoid those types of problems, one suggestion is to invest in the value of deterrence as a proactive solution. Theft deterrent policies and loss prevention programs often go a long way toward educating a company’s workforce on what to look for and how to spot potential problems. Using this approach, employees often take a more active role in helping you, the employer, maintain a safer work environment.

The lessons learned from implementing a loss prevention program can extend to every part of an employer’s business, including its inventory, accounting practices and security procedures.

Remind employees that everyone has a responsibility to notify a company official of a situation when it arises. Be sure to reinforce the necessity and importance of training, and be sure to explain this during employee orientation.

Regardless of which path your company chooses in refining its policies and procedures, keep in mind that prevention is the quickest method for breaking old habits and solving your workplace issues.



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#### INFORMATION LINK

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