

## DISHONESTY IN THE RETAIL STORE ENVIRONMENT-(Part 2)

by Linda Carter

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Following is an article by Jon Searles that I felt was excellently written and I am publishing with the author's permission. I hope you enjoy it. Even more, I hope it opens some eyes as to the theft that is most likely going on in your store right now.

### **Stealing From Your Employer Is Acceptable When . . .**

I have accumulated quite a few stories involving employees that were inappropriately discharged for actions their employers consider theft. After reading each example, each of you will agree that none of these employees hurt anyone and caused no real harm to their employer. Their actions could have been ignored or they simply could have received a mild reprimand and forgiveness. There are too many companies with workers who give their best and they do not receive proper reward or compensation; therefore, slight indiscretions make up for a company's lack of acknowledgement of a job well done. Ninety-nine percent of their work is exemplary and they are released for a simple error in judgment, or misunderstanding of company policy. Why not allow the employee to scratch out a few more pennies of perks from their job and [the employer can just] write it off as a well invested business expense. The following stories could not possibly provoke any of you to discharge these individuals from employment knowing that they may have families to care for and bills to pay.

Bill was a new manager of a local grocery store. He had to make sure he looked professional so he just knew his employer would not mind if he borrowed some cleaning soap, rags, a water hose, and a little time on the clock by the back door during his shift to wash and wax his car.

Carol knew that the company she worked with made over 280 million dollars a year. She knew she was the only one that handled the cash at the company branch she worked in and no one else really knew the totals. She knew her corporate managers and local manager would not notice the \$30,000 she slowly siphoned off in 10 weeks.

Teresa just got a great new roll top desk at home with a new computer. She needed to outfit the new rig and decided that her employer would not miss the stapler, pencils, pens, paper, computer disks, and other items.

Johnny really enjoyed calling his new friends on the 1- 900 numbers that he found in his magazines. He knew that his company's phone bill consisted of many, many pages of itemized numbers and no one would notice the excess charges even if they were \$300-\$500 a month.

Linda enjoyed serving food to her patrons. She had worked for four years with the restaurant and did not think it would be a problem to take a few rib-eye steaks for a dinner party. After all, some customers threw away more steak than she was taking.

Andrew was hungry. He had money and he had food at home but he always woke up to late to fix his lunch or forgot to get something. However, he knew that the ladies who worked in the manufacturing facility where he worked would have plenty of lunches [for him] to choose from in the break room refrigerator. If he needed to get a lunch a day or two a week, he was sure that the slightly overweight women would appreciate him eating it for them.

Dave knew he did not make enough money with his current employer. They offered great insurance and benefits but his hourly pay was below par. He was not constantly supervised so it was easy to use his work truck and tools to do a little side work for cash. He was able to accomplish all his work, so a little side work should not be a problem.

Randy loved rodeo and it led him to be an amateur bull rider. He enjoyed the smell of the rodeo arena and the yell of the crowds as they released him and his bull from the pen. One Sunday he took a hard fall and may have torn a muscle in his back. Luckily, he was able to get out of bed the next morning and make it to work. After one hour of work as a warehouse worker he told his supervisor he twisted his back lifting a box. Subsequently, he was out of work for 8 weeks. His company's worker's comp insurance was the only reason he was able to pay his bills and heal for the next rodeo.

This is only a sampling of the stories with which I have first hand experience. My hope is that each of you when reading this realized that each individual fired was positively, without reservation, given exactly what he or she deserved. You hopefully realized quickly that the first paragraph was simply trying to see if you screamed "Darn right!" or "Are you crazy!". My hope is that your work ethic/behavior value system does not consider the people in the stories martyrs of the rich employers who take advantage of their employees. My expectations for employees have wavered over the years, but I have approached each new person and new employee with a naïve sense of trust for each new individual. Giving each person the benefit of the doubt seems a fairer approach than distrusting people immediately. Obviously, a person can build and strengthen trust over time, but each needs an initial bit to show their true heart. If you have ever interviewed anyone and asked "Are you honest?" you will find that everyone says "Yes, of course!" Unfortunately, not all who answer are being candid. I think it would be a nice change if people would let me know that "No, please do not misplace your trust in me for I will disappoint you and steal from you and the company because you have more that I do and I want it for me and my family."

Hourly, salary, blue collar, white collar, rookie, or professional are all represented in the stories above. One individual was even a weekend pastor at a small church. At what point do people decide that taking things that do not belong to them is acceptable? Many will attempt in vain to justify inappropriate conduct with the Robin Hood thought process of taking from the "haves" by the "have nots" as being the way life is. Spend a little too much time surfing the net during work? Cheat on your taxes? Keep excess change that is not yours? Steal an identity? How would you answer the question "Are you honest?"

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