

Prevent Sweethearting

Employee theft costs U.S. companies more than \$600 billion each year and “sweethearting” is responsible for nearly 35 percent of that amount. Employee theft can take place numerous ways, but one of the largest areas of employee theft, and one of the most difficult instances to combat, involves sweethearting. Sweethearting is when the employee gives away products or services for free or at a discount to friends or family members. It is not a typical theft scenario, as there may not be a direct benefit to the employee.

Sweethearting is

- Simple – Employees don’t associate sweethearting as stealing, but rather as a favor to someone else. It is simple to not scan an item or give away items that don’t have a bar code associated with them, such as food or drinks.
- Usually Not Noticed – When items are sweethearted, there is no transaction data associated with the item to track it. Sweethearting is usually only noticed by in-person or CCTV observation or tip-offs, thus the chances of being caught are slim unless the proper tools and resources are in place.
- Common – Once the ways of a work environment are learned from co-workers, so are the shortcuts and bad habits. It is common to provide complimentary food or services to customers, but not consistently and without potential future benefit to the organization.

Common Sweethearting Behaviors

- Bypassing register scanners.

- Providing unauthorized complimentary food or drinks.
- “Forgetting” to charge for an item.
- Bartering with other businesses.
- Charging an incorrect amount.

What Employers Can Do

- Continuous education and awareness of sweethearting are critical.
- Ensure all employees are aware of your theft policies, consequences and the real cost of theft to the business.
- Make pre-employment screening a hiring best practice.
- Position security officers at exits to examine receipts to ensure all purchases are paid for.
- Focus CCTV surveillance on all entrances, exits and checkouts.
- Keep accurate inventory.



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