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## Keeping Your Profits

*by Tony Ramos, President, Integra Security Alliance*

For most companies, the upcoming holiday season represents a significant portion of their expected annual sales/profit; for some this could mean up to two-thirds. Many companies will have to supplement their current staff by adding full and part-time seasonal employees, a process that could potentially maximize either profit or loss. According to the Small Business Administration, 30% of employees steal from their employers. How many dishonest employees can your company afford? With so much at risk and so little time, now would be an excellent time to review your employee selection process.

**Employee Background Checks** -- Know who you're hiring. Choose a competent screening service to provide you with at least a social security trace and a county-court level criminal record search. The screening company should be able to provide you with the results in 24 to 48 hours. They should also have a current hit-rate of at least 10%; more is best. Hit-rate is one of the most important factors in establishing the quality of the screening service. Simply stated, it's the total number of screens processed by the screening company divided by the number of criminal records they actually fine. This will clearly show how effective and proficient they are in conducting the search. Most companies, for obvious reasons, will refuse to provide this information. Also, look for the years in business and endorsements. Finally, make sure the screening vendor is FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act) compliant. This will provide you with additional protective immunities against civil lawsuits, defamation, invasion of privacy and negligence.

**Employee Assessments** -- Most large companies rely on sophisticated processes and have individuals who are dedicated to hiring and retaining valued employees. Smaller companies do not have that luxury. Presidents, owners and managers are required to wear many different hats and their primary concerns typically revolve around running the day-to-day business and making a profit. The monumental challenges of running a successful company, increasing sales and managing human capital can be difficult for even the most experienced manager. By implementing quality assessments evaluation programs, those in authority can take the guess work out of the interviewing process. Since most managers in small to mid-sized companies are not experienced interviewers, these systems provide targeted interview questions which address developmental needs. By using a proven and objective system, these assessments can identify the person best qualified to compliment the existing staff and even allow managers to provide growth plans for those hired.

**Investigations** -- Again, with so much at risk during such a narrow window, consider hiring a plain clothes investigator (undercover) that will be part of your general work force. This is a tool currently under utilized by most companies, and if properly managed can bring high yields on your investment. A properly managed and directed program will provide you with information on theft related issues, drug use, and an evaluation of current policies and assessment of your frontline managers/supervisors. A well conducted investigation will point out other operating deficiencies which will allow you to maximize your time and dollars spent to correct the actual vs. perceived problems. Investigators should only be hired through a qualified security company. Although there are many security companies that may offer this service as a sideline, there are only a few that "specialize" in providing this type of service. Interview the person who will actually be managing the investigator for the security company, the success of the investigation and your ROI will be determined by the caliber, experience and knowledge of this individual.

No program can completely eliminate the problem of employee dishonesty. However, programs like these when properly administered, can help you to manage and maintain your losses and react in a timely and cost-effective manner.

### About the Author:

Tony Ramos is president of Integra Security Alliance with over 30-years of combined private security experience in industries which have included retail, sales and consulting. This experience has also led him to author the "Guide for Background Checks" which has been adopted by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. More information can be obtained from his web-site at [www.integrasecurity.org](http://www.integrasecurity.org), or by contacting him at [tramos@integrasecurity.org](mailto:tramos@integrasecurity.org).

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