

Shoplifters come from all walks of life. Basically, however, they fall into two broad categories: ordinary customers and professionals who steal for a living.

TYPES OF SHOPLIFTERS

The amateur steals on impulse. His most important motive is a simple desire for the item itself. Usually, he takes food, clothing or other items that he actually intends to use. Generally, the amateur is nervous and self-conscious, but cautious.

The kleptomaniac steals compulsively whenever he gets the urge, however, there are very few true kleptomaniacs. Usually, the kleptomaniac is nervous and shy.

The juvenile steals mainly for the thrills or to gain status in the peer group. Most of thieves are girls. Usually, they work in groups, but not necessarily in organized gangs. Basically, they take merchandise (such as records, clothes or recreational items) they intend to use.

The professional is a skillful operator who knows all of the tricks of the trade. The professional shoplifter dresses, talks and acts so he doesn't attract attention or arouse suspicion. He is usually interested in a small, high-value items for which there is an easy resale market. The professional shoplifter is likely to be very cautious. Generally the professional steals for a living.

The narcotics addict needs money to support his habit. When desperate, he steals in a brazen manner. He is often frantic beyond reason and can be dangerous if you attempt to apprehend him.

The vagrant steals because of need. Usually, he takes food, alcoholic beverages, tobacco and clothing for personal use. Often, the vagrant is under the influence of alcohol.

SHOPLIFTING

Although the average shoplifting loss is small, the cumulative amount is quite high, from \$500 million to \$1 billion per year. How can you protect your business from shoplifting losses? You have to be aware of shoplifter's habits and their methods of operation in order to defend yourself against them.

RECOGNIZING THE SHOPLIFTER

Shoplifting requires a quick hand and a speedy (but not obviously fast) exit. Unfortunately, many employees are not familiar with some of the characteristics of shoplifters. Be alert for people:

- Leaving the area hastily.
- Frequenting the washroom.
- Entering the store carrying bundles, bags, boxes, topcoats, briefcases, newspapers, or umbrellas. An arm in a sling could also be a handy hiding place for stolen merchandise.

- Wearing heavy outer garments out of season, baggy clothes or full skirts.
- Walking in an unusual manner, tugging at a sleeve, adjusting socks, rubbing the back of the neck or other actions which might help them to hide shoplifted articles.
- Reaching into display counters or walking behind sales counters.
- Picking up and putting down a variety of articles, pretending to be undecided, confused or fussy.
- Showing practically no interest in articles about which they have inquired.
- Roaming around supposedly waiting for a friend to shop.
- Perspiring in a room with normal temperature or a person who is nervous, flushed or dry-lipped.
- Keeping one hand constantly in an outer coat pocket.

How does a shoplifter get your merchandise out of your store? Depending on his standing (amateur or professional) and his talents, he uses various methods to help in his work.

SHOPLIFTING METHODS

The professional shoplifter spends time perfecting his techniques. He adopts methods that fit his unique talents and the kind of merchandise he intends to steal. The professional shoplifter plans ahead; he knows what he wants, where to find it and how to get it.

The amateur, on the other hand, isn't always as ingenious as the professional shoplifter. His methods are usually crude and obvious.

Be on the lookout for shoplifters. Learn to recognize his methods of operation. Watch for the person who:

- Palms small articles. Packages, newspapers, coats, gloves and other things that are carried in the hand can be used as shoplifting aids.
- Carries an umbrella or other device (such as a knitting bag, diaper bag, large purse, briefcase, paper bag, booster box, etc.) to conceal merchandise.
- Has a slit in the pocket of his outer garment. This is a boon to the shoplifter. He can place his hand through the slit so it appears that his hand is in his pocket. This way he can carry stolen merchandise in the hand which appears to be in the pocket.
- Wears a shirt, slacks or other garment with an elastic waistband or wears "shoplifter bloomers."
- Tries on a garment, places his outer garment over the stolen one and wears your merchandise out of the store.
- Has hooks inside his or her coat, slacks, dress or slip. Hooks come in handy for neatly hanging up and comfortably transporting stolen goods.
- Enters the store without jewelry or accessories, but wears or carries items of this type when he leaves.
- Wears a long outer coat and conceals articles between his legs.
- Walks to an unattended section or one near an exit, grabs several pieces of merchandise and departs from the store in haste.

Shoplifters may work alone or in groups. While it's impossible to give an infallible rule of thumb, experience has shown that juveniles and professionals tend to work in groups, while the impulse shoplifter is a loner.

COMBATING THE SHOPLIFTER

What can you and your employees do to discourage shoplifters from frequenting your store? Training in alertness and effective detection techniques will improve your chances of recognizing the shoplifter.

Crime prevention experts generally agree that the best deterrent to shoplifting is an alert, well-trained staff which pays careful attention to the needs of the customers.

Here are a few more things you and your staff can do:

- Serve all customers as quickly and efficiently as possible. Customers who are approached immediately will appreciate the service. Shoplifters will realize that this is not the time or the place to attempt a theft.
- Acknowledge the presence of additional customers with the phrase, "I'll be with you in a moment" when you are busy with a previous customer.
- Don't ever turn your back on a customer. This is an open invitation to the shoplifter to proceed with his business. If you have to use the phone, turn so you can see your sales area.
- Keep an eye on people who are loitering or wandering around.

- Never leave the store or department unattended. This is the opportunity the shoplifter is waiting for.
- Lock up expensive merchandise that is attractive to the shoplifters. A showcase display containing these items should be placed in a position where it can be watched by more than one salesperson.
- Don't stack merchandise so high that sales people can't see over it.
- Keep counters and tables neat and orderly.
- Arrange merchandise so that customers must pick it up. If it's not arranged this way, merchandise can be pushed off the counter into some type of container.
- Display only one item when merchandise comes in pairs, such as, shoes.
- Attach merchandise in some way so that it will be difficult to remove.
- Return to stock any merchandise which was taken out for a customer's inspection and was not sold.
- Give each customer a receipt for every purchase. It's hard for a customer to get a cash refund on an item that isn't accompanied by a valid receipt.
- Keep the area clear of discarded salesreceipts. Shoplifters may use them as evidence as purchase.
- Develop a warning system to alert other employees when a suspected shoplifter is in the store. In a small store, you can use a code word or phrase.
- Develop a procedure for employees to notify the office of the presence of suspected shoplifters.
- Establish definite register procedures to deter till tappers.
 - a. Open the register only when a sale has been rung up.

- b. Close the drawer before packaging the merchandise.
- c. Don't allow any customer to distract the cashier while helping somebody.
- d. Keep registers locked when not being used.

Every store should have definite policies regarding shoplifters. Adopt a clear, evenly enforced shoplifting policy. Post this policy to make sure that both staff and customers are aware of it. Your time and money are better spent in preventing crime than prosecuting it.

APPREHENSION & PROSECUTION

While good deterrent systems will greatly reduce shoplifting, there are always people who are too dumb or too "smart" to be deterred.

Remember, you must be able to:

See the person take or conceal merchandise,

Identify the merchandise as yours,

Testify that it was taken with the intent to

steal,

Prove that the merchandise was not paid for.



SHOPLIFTING



ANOTHER WORD FOR STEALING