



What Makes A Strong Loss Pr

By Murry Taylor

For any high performing team, there are multiple facets at play at any one time to continually produce results at a high level. Add to that the fact the Loss Prevention Department is often (and unjustly I might add) seen as an unfortunate expense to the business and you've just added a significant amount of pressure to ensuring top performance.

The best place to start building performance is at the top: depending on the size of the

organisation this position will usually be either at a national or state level. Either way the success or failure of the loss prevention team ultimately sits with this person.

I'm sure most of you have worked for both good and bad bosses; and those that have can testify to the fact that a company can be perceived as one of the best employers around but when you report directly to a 'monster' you couldn't care less if the company was voted best

place to work in the universe. People work for people, not organisations, so there are several core attributes a manager needs to display to enable him/her to build a high performing team. Some of these attributes are:

Optimism

The last thing you need from the head of a department is a continual message of doom and gloom. As the head of your department/team,



evention Team?

it's your responsibility to keep the troops happy and at times that may mean shelving your own opinions on how certain things are being done. For example, a new line may be coming out and you want it locked away due to its the desirability but management want it on show. If that's what they want even after you have put your case forward, then you need to sell that message to your team and work around it as best you can.

Consistency

When your team comes to work, it's critical they know that your expectations and the interaction they'll have with you are going to be the same as yesterday and the same as the day before that. There is almost nothing that fractures a team quicker than a manager who changes his or her direction, personality and/or philosophies on a daily basis. In order to flourish, your team needs stability and that will come with being consistent.

Relationship Building

Loss prevention departments are really service providers. While you may all be part of the one company the fact is, loss prevention provides a service to the operational team, and so the ability to build and foster strong relationships is critical. I've seen loss prevention managers who were despised by the operational managers and as a result of this, the loss prevention team's name was mud. On the flip side of this, I have also seen



loss prevention teams very well respected by the operational arm of the business and these teams have flourished. An important distinction to make here is by building relationships, I don't mean selling out as this defeats the purpose of the team; I just mean earning and showing respect to fellow managers.

Drive

True leadership is demonstrated, not talked about. If you expect your team to do additional hours on a semi-regular basis, then you had better be doing it on a regular basis. Every manager I've worked for and respected was highly driven and had a work ethic that was inspiring. No team member worked harder or longer than their leader did and in turn it would always drive the team to continually improve.

Promotion

By this I mean if you have a team member who contributes something that will further enhance your team, or they are demonstrating skills that can be further promoted, then do exactly that – promote them, praise them. As I'm sure many of you can attest, there is nothing more frustrating and demotivating than your manager taking credit for work you have delivered. Strong managers understand they are only as good as their team, and by promoting and praising your team you are doing several things – motivating

your team member/s, improving the profile of your team/department and highlighting the fact that you lead a high performing team.

A team manager who displays these attributes will go a long way to ensuring the loss prevention department is a committed team so the next part of the equation is ensuring your team is armed with the relevant skill sets to perform the job required of them. These skills will vary depending on the size and type of business you are looking after. However, there are some core skills within loss prevention that translate across all industries.

An important distinction to make is that not every team member needs to excel in every skill set; as long you have all the required skills covered, then you can allocate work based on strengths and training based on opportunities for further improvement. Some of the core skills your team will require are:

Understanding The Reporting Structure Of The Business

If you're the manager, it is so important to ensure your team understands the business protocols. Some businesses will have an expectation that when investigating a store or employee, you or your team member must advise a manager responsible for that site or person prior to any contact taking place. Other businesses will expect you to consult with HR

at some stage during the process and for the lucky few there are companies that will just let the department get on with its job and wait for a report once the entire fact finding process has concluded. Regardless of which scenario fits your organisation, it is critical to fit in with the businesses requirements.

Factual Investigations

In its simplest form, this means gathering the facts and being able to present findings to the business based on these facts. This sounds simple enough but it's amazing how many reports are written providing an overview of an incident based on the 'factual investigation', that are laced with personal opinions and assumptions. When you start to add opinion and assumptions into a factual investigation it will only be a matter of time before the team comes unstuck because of an unfair dismissal or civil suit against the company. The facts are the facts; they don't offer opinion, emotion or assumptions so neither should your team.

Interviews

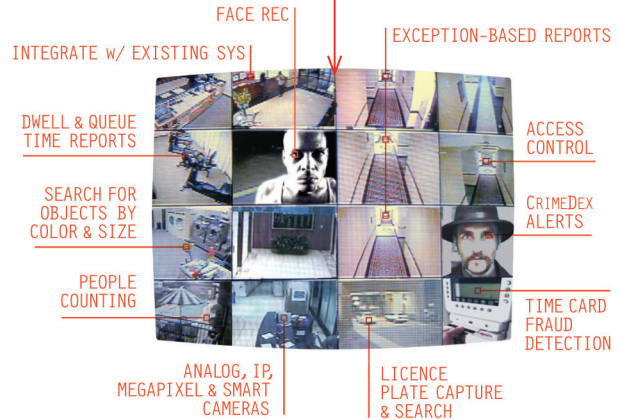
It's amazing how many people think conducting an interview is an easy process and one that most people could do. If you are talking about interviewing somebody applying for a job or a minor disciplinary matter, then this thought process is probably correct. However, these types of interviews are very different to interviewing a suspected thief. This is the area where your team members need to be very resilient and have developed strong communication skills and thick skins because when offenders realise they have been caught out, they can become quite hostile. If your team gets this process right and gets positive results with minimal fuss it won't take very long to build a positive reputation within the business. ■

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