

THEFT AMONG HOTEL'S EMPLOYEES: FACTORS INVOLVED AND THE SOLUTION

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Introduction

One of the greatest concerns of the hotel lodging industry today is the issues of security. Lodging properties in the past boasted one house detective to keep crime in check. Today is not uncommon for large properties to hire a team of officers to maintain security in the establishment. Estimates of employees' theft in the workplace are very high. While accurate statistics are difficult to obtain, it is believed that half of all employees steal from their employers. This is particularly credible for the hospitality industry where wages are low and working conditions leave much to be desired. (Matt, 1999).

When you check into your hotel, drop your things off in your room and head to the pool or into town to explore. When you come back your laptop is gone. Your notebook is missing. Your watch and rings aren't where you left them. Ever worry this might happen to you? Unfortunately a hotel theft is a real risk and even the best hotels have reported them. There is no need to work you up over preventing hotel thefts though.

Definition of Theft

Theft is defined as a person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it; and "thief" and "steal" shall be construed accordingly. It is immaterial whether the appropriation is made with a view to gain, or is made for the thief's own benefit.

How To Solve The Problem In The Hotel

There are many ways to prevent the theft in the hotel. One of that is hiring the honest people. But how we know that? So the best ways that management can do are: firstly, monitor employee access and activities. Managers should know which employees have keys to access the certain area, codes to the safe or access to cash drawers and some strict area. Keys or codes are important responsibilities. These people should be held accountable for these responsibilities and always respond in any situation.

Secondly, define procedures for cash handling and operation. Cash handling practices apply to any employee who accepts cash from a customer for example at the front desk, bar tender or café. Be sure that there are cash-handling procedures for all areas that handling cash especially at the restaurant. All the operation should have their own procedure. This standard operating procedure (SOP) can make employee always on track and to ensure that everything is done in a standard way to maintain the quality. (Raghubalan, 2009)

Third, be present with the team. The more the manager present and involved in the operating procedures, the less likely it is that an internal incident of theft will occur. Fourthly, keep checks on product inventory. Manager should be in control of monitoring and tracking inventory information every day. Keeping a consistent and accurate record of items and other supplies increases the chances that any incidents will be identified immediately.

Lastly, install proper security systems. Many hotels have security systems in place both for internal and external causes of theft or vandalism. For instance, management might create several codes to the safe to make it more difficult for anyone without a code to access the cash. A management may also install security cameras outside and inside the hotel as an extra measure to monitor any inappropriate behavior. Besides that, hotel can provide room security box or room safe box in every room.

Ten Tips To Help Avoids Hotels Theft

Before You Book - Before you ever book your hotel you need to determine the area of town you would like to stay in. You don't need to have all of the activities planned and your itinerary mapped out. Although, that could save you a lot of time and money in regards to transportation costs. To make sure you are staying in a safe hotel check online to see where it is located. Is it in a busy business district? Near tourist locations? Close to a police station? Is it in a seedy

area of town? Google Maps, MapQuest and especially Google Earth are good tools to use to get a “feel” for the area of town and what is nearby. While these are good tools, online reviews at Hotels.com and TripAdvisor.com also hold value in determining if a hotel is deemed safe. If you are traveling internationally, make sure to check with the U.S. State Department as it offers country-specific safety information on its Web site; see Travel Warnings and Advisories to see hot spots and areas to avoid.

Selecting the Hotel Room - You may not have a choice of rooms when you are checking into a hotel, if you do try to avoid staying in a hotel room located on the ground floor, especially those located off the parking lot with windows and doors that open to the exterior of the hotel. Ground floor hotel rooms that open to an interior hallway or courtyard tend to be safer options but those above the first floor are ideal.

Lock It Up - Have a luggage lock? You should. Not just for when you are in transit but for your hotel room. Locking your luggage in your hotel room is an easy way to avoid hotel thefts. Either pack everything you are traveling with in the mornings before you head out and lock your suitcase or simply put any valuable items – laptops, notebooks, cameras, phones – in your bag. Taking this one step further, consider investing \$20-\$50 in security cables that physically lock your suitcase or equipment down. Using a security cable, you can easily secure your bag to a pipe in the bathroom or a stationery piece of furniture. Note, make sure you’re using a slash proof bag. On a side note, most computers can be individually locked down with a laptop cable lock.

Keys - If your room keys are electronic and one is lost ask the hotel for a new room key – not a duplicate. This will reprogram the lock on the door in case the key was stolen. It is important to note there have been a few security flaws reported in common keycard locks, resulting many hotel room break-ins. Essentially the electronic locks were hacked, allowing thieves to enter hotel rooms undetected. All the more reason to follow the previous tip.

Safes Aren’t Always The Safest - Most hotels have in-room safes and most of them charge you for that added security. Yet this added hotel security does not mean your belongings are insured by the hotel if there is a robbery. Most hotels are protected by individual states’ innkeeper’s laws, which state the hotel is not responsible for theft from your room – including the in-room safe. The exception is if you use the safe the hotel has behind its front desk. If you

choose to use the front desk's safe, make sure the items are insured. Using the safe in your hotel room doesn't even mean your things are locked up. Most hotels have a back-way into their in-room safes, be it a master key or a master code. Management has access to these in case they need to assist guests if they lose their keys/code to the safe. This poses a security risk since there are people who can access your belongings. If you are not staying in a hotel that has a safe or simply don't want to deal with a safe, check out a few diversion safes. These are items that appear to be everyday objects but they are so much more. A simple hairspray bottle that's been emptied out to hold cash or jewelry. Shaving cream cans and soda cans where the tops screw off or a book that has a hidden compartment, all create perfect containers to store valuables and travel documents.

The Obvious - There are so many little things that seem to be common sense, but are often overlooked by travelers especially people who have become "comfortable" traveling. Here's a quick reminder. Firstly, don't travel with your valuable jewelry. Second, don't leave items just laying around your room – jewelry, technology, computers, notebooks, cameras, even receipts (think identity theft). Third, When you leave make sure your door is locked. Sounds silly but take a moment and turn around to make sure the door has closed and the lock has engaged. Lastly, Don't share your room number with others.

When You're in Your Room - Hotel room thefts typically take place when you're not in the room. But, we've all stayed in those questionable places where a bit of added security would make for a better night sleep or for a longer shower. Besides moving a dresser in front of the door, there are a few small and inexpensive alarms you can travel with to protect yourself and your belongings when you're in your room

Be Present Even When You're Out - Making your room always look occupied deters thefts. Simply leaving the TV or radio on a low volume can make it appear that someone is in the room. And, if you don't need your room cleaned, hang the Do Not Disturb sign on the door to keep cleaning staff out of the room. This doesn't just eliminate possible thefts from hotel staff but from someone pretending they are staying in your room and coming back to grab a few things while the room is being cleaned. This does happen, and according to recent reports it's fairly common. The Do Not Disturb sign isn't a sure fire way to keep cleaning crews out of your room though. To help ensure cleaning staff do not enter your room, call down to the front desk ask them to not clean your room.

Read the Small Print - Who reads the small print on the room registration documents you get when you either book a hotel online or check into a hotel? Be honest. Probably not. Well, you should. These documents detail what the hotel will and will not cover in terms of theft. Typically hotels do not insure their guest's belongings.

Travel Insurance - Insurance is a necessary evil. Before you purchase travel insurance though, check with your existing homeowners or renters insurance to see if your policy covers things like thefts when you're traveling.

What you should do if you are robbed? - If your room is broken into immediately report it to security and the management at the hotel. You will be asked to file a detailed report and the police may be called. If they are, expect to fill out more paperwork.

If your hotel room has a electronic door lock you can ask for a "reading" of the door lock to see when the room has been accessed and by whom. The "whom" part may not help if your hotel room was robbed by someone who stole your key or walked in when the room was being cleaned.

Don't expect the hotel to reimburse you for your belongings. By law, they are not required to. However, they should do everything they can to help you find the thief and your belongings.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, safety and security in housekeeping department should be understood that both are means of safeguarding human and physical assets. The theft may be come from the guest or employee itself. All hospitality establishments need to provide a safe and secure environment for both guests as well as employees in order to give an excellent service.

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