

Protecting Your Finances

Six Easy Ways To Protect Yourself And Your Business From Information Theft

(NAPSA)—Most people know how vulnerable they are to identity theft as a consumer, but few realize how costly and common information theft is in today's business world. In fact, six out of 10 American companies and government agencies have already been hacked, according to Frank Abagnale, the subject of the blockbuster movie "Catch Me If You Can" and now a secure document expert working with Staples Contract Division, Staples, Inc., to better educate businesses about protecting confidential information.

According to Javelin Strategy and Research, businesses and consumers lost an estimated \$56.6 billion due to identity and information theft last year. Identity and information theft is also time consuming, with 40 hours spent per victim to resolve the issue.

"U.S. businesses last year reported over 100 significant data breaches affecting nearly 56 million individuals," said Abagnale. "Companies and their employees must take the proper steps to safeguard and secure their information at all times."

Recent studies show that businesses may think they are more protected than they really are. According to public think tank Privacy and American Business, more than 80 percent of small-business owners exhibit confidence in their existing protective measures, but 56 percent have experienced one or more security incidents in the



past 12 months, making perception at odds with reality.

Workplaces are ripe targets for information thieves, as important documents and equipment are often left unprotected on a regular basis. To protect confidential information in your business, Frank Abagnale and Staples Contract Division recommend the following tips:

- Be informed about the privacy laws that affect your organization: According to the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACTA), every company must destroy confidential employee and customer information before disposing of it or face penalties of up to \$2,000 per infraction. Know the law so you can identify what information is considered confidential and what steps you can take to protect it.

- Get in the habit of shredding information: Destroy confidential information using a shredder the minute you no longer need it.

Microcut shredders, such as Staples Ultra Quiet Heavy Duty MicroCut Shredder, work best because they reduce paper to confetti-sized pieces which can't be put back together.

- Lock up important files. Keep important documents, CDs and flash drives in locked file cabinets or drawers. Fireproof lockboxes offer added protection.

- Install a firewall and virus software on your computer. Your computer is an information thief's top target. Virus protection programs, such as Symantec's Norton AntiVirus 2007, can prevent intruders from hacking into your computer system and let you control what information gets transmitted to other Web sites.

- Secure your equipment. Equip laptops, PCs and any other peripherals with anti-theft locks, such as the Kensington MicroSaver Notebook Lock.

- Stay nearby when printing and copying. Don't print or fax confidential materials unless an authorized individual is on hand to handle the materials at the printer or copier. Immediately remove materials from printing and copy machines.

To help you learn more about how to effectively protect yourself and your business from identity and information theft, Frank Abagnale along with Staples Contract Division, Staples, Inc., have created a webcast which can be viewed at www.StaplesContract.com.