Small Business News & Notes

Tips To Foil Small-Business Fraud

(NAPSA)—A few precautions can be a big help in making it harder to commit fraud. According to a recent SunTrust Bank and National Small Business Association survey, 84 percent of small-business owners are concerned with fraud in connection with their businesses, and this trend is rising. Here are several tips any business owner can use to protect his or her investment:

• **Hire the right employees**—Always conduct background checks for employees, especially those dealing with inventory or money. Also, call references and verify credentials; too often, employers do not take advantage of these glimpses into an employee's past.

• **Set up checks and balances—**One hand should never wash the other when it comes to business. It is important to have checks and balances in place to prevent stealing and embezzling. For example, the person writing the checks should never be the same person balancing the books.

• **Have a fraud policy in place with a fraud hotline—** Starting from new employee orientation and continuing through newsletters and meetings, make sure you instill a fraud policy in your office. Doing so will ensure that employees know from day one that fraudulent activities and stealing will not be tolerated. A fraud hotline also promotes vigilance, and the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners has found that companies with fraud hotlines have approximately 50 percent less in losses due to fraud.

• **Have assignment rotations-—**If your business allows it, rotate employee assignments. When roles are consistently changed, it makes it harder for an

Small businesses can get a big hand in protecting their assets with a few sensible procedures.

employee to commit fraud without being caught.

• **Consider using an automated banking service**—One such service, offered by SunTrust, features Fraud Inspector, which helps small-business owners to identify and curb potential fraud on their deposit accounts.

• **Protect your wireless network**—Online hackers have become quite good at breaking into unsecured wireless networks and stealing private customer and business information. Protect your business and customers by changing the default password on your network and encrypting your wireless network with WPA (Wi-Fi-Protected Access).

• **Pay attention when making online transactions**—Be aware of the Web site's privacy and security policy if your business conducts online transactions. Also, always make sure you are entering your information into a secure site. A good way to determine if a site is secure is to look at the URL address. Ensure that the URL is entered correctly and that it starts with https://, not just http://. The "s" means that the site is secure.

To learn more about protecting your small business from fraud, visit www.suntrust.com/foilfraud.