Now's the Time: Learn How to Prevent Time Theft in the Workplace

Time is money! So, employers - consider the value of both your time and your employees' time! Make sure you have a time and attendance solution that is accurate and effective to avoid time theft in the workplace.

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We all know that episode of NBC's The Office where Dwight announces that he has never taken any personal time at work - prompting Jim to purchase a stopwatch and keep track of every time Dwight takes a "break" from work. Jim takes this task quite seriously and times any non-work activity, from chatting about Battlestar Galactica to yawning and using the restroom. During this time, Dwight takes extreme measures to not stop working for a second; he even sneezes with his eyes open, which is honestly impressive. While many of those things wouldn't actually be considered " time theft " in today's workplace, we know that this is still an issue in the U.S. According to a study done by the American Payroll Association (APA) , almost 75% of American businesses are affected by time theft . So if sneezing doesn't count, you might be wondering, what *is* time theft? And how can you prevent it - without resorting to a stopwatch?

Here are 4 common ways employees steal time from employers:

Recording inaccurate time

According to the APA's study, 45% of respondents admitted to recording inaccurate times being the method of time theft they used. Although it may be innocent and only a couple of minutes' difference, we know that inaccurate time and attendance can be costly! The APA estimates that time theft can cost companies up to 7% of their gross annual payroll. How does this happen? Well, it's a lot easier to get away with on a manual time system. If your system is manual or outdated, you might want to consider implementing time and attendance software to accurately track your employees' work time.

Taking time for personal activities

The APA reports that 43% of respondents admitted to stealing time through frequent personal activity. There is a time and a place for personal activity in the workplace - at Viventium, we like to call this the work-life blend. However, if there is too much personal activity going on - like Michael Scott's confession, "when I first discovered YouTube, I didn't work for five days" - and not enough work activity, we lose out on productivity! That's a lot of ivity. Want to avoid confusion among your employees? This is where HR and time and attendance collide! Make sure your employees are always informed on your company's policies via a thorough and informative employee handbook .

Taking frequent breaks

According to the APA's study, 42% of respondents admitted to stealing company time by taking frequent breaks. Here comes HR again - this is another instance in which your employee handbook can come in handy. Make sure you have a clear-cut policy when it comes to employee breaks and that all employees are aware of this.

Buddy Punching

According to the APA's study, 23% of respondents admitted to buddy punching being the method of time theft they used. If you've never heard the term "buddy punching," I'll break it down for you. Buddy punching is quite literally when you have "your buddy" clock-in for you when you are not yet at work. It might sound like this... **Employee #1 (Jim) on the phone with Employee #2 (Dwight):** Hello, Dwight, I am running 30 minutes late today, but I can't clock-in after 9 AM, because I was late yesterday. Can you pleaseeee clock-in for me? **Dwight:** Sure, Jim. Anything for you! **Jim:** Great, thanks. I will see you in 30 minutes. We encourage having workplace "buddies," but not this practice!- Obviously, you want to avoid buddy punching. A good way to avoid this issue might be through biometric clocks. According to the APA's study, biometric clocks are among the least used devices that have been used to commit time theft, coming in at only 3% ! This type of time and attendance

device requires that you clock-in and out via fingerprint recognition - in other words, only the actual employee can clock themselves in and out. Time is money! So, employers - consider the value of both your time and your employees' time! Make sure you have a time and attendance solution in place that is accurate and effective - and don't let Michael on YouTube.

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