

PETTY THEFT

So, you think it's petty when you've 'borrowed' someone's calculator for only a minute and a few days go by and they start getting ancy with you for allegedly 'stealing' it. 'Come on, get a grip' you think to yourself. But really is there a bigger issue here?

BY CLAUDIA REIZNER

Is your stuff really safe in the office? Do you need to hide away your possessions, particularly your valuables, from not just the light fingers of other employees, but from the likes of visitors who make a one off visit never to be seen again.

I heard only the other day of a guy who walked into an advertising agency dressed in a suit posing as one of the staff. Silently he mingled among the workers at their desks lifting mobile phones and wallets. Fortunately nowadays in advertising agencies most people don't tend to wear suits so he did in fact stand out like a sore thumb and was

wrestled out of the office by the three bravest guys! The point here is be vigilant. You'd like to think your colleagues are decent people but you just don't know who walks past your desk when you aren't there.

Theft however in the office comes in many different guises and it's not just the staff who have to be vigilant – it's the bosses who have to be wary of the staff! 'I'm honest – I don't steal' I hear you say.

But can you answer truthfully that you have never done any of the following:

- talked to a friend on the company phone
- photocopied some important documents at the office

- emailed a friend on the company email
- booked a train ticket on the company internet
- popped one of your letters in with the company post
- taken some pens home because you keep losing yours

If you say 'yes' to any of those (and I bet you can to just about all of them) you have indeed been literally stealing from your company. While that sounds a bit heavy handed and after all they don't seem to care, if you imagine that everyone is probably doing the same it really does add up financially.

Take on board what I call the 'silent theft' areas such as inflating

your expenses and declaring more hours worked than really were and businesses have quite an issue on their hands.

But before we get over excited and start firing people for stealing a biro, I really believe the morale of staff is directly related to the amount of theft in an office. If staff are paid well, their efforts rewarded by impromptu thankyou's, the company holds the odd party, staff feel valued and less inclined to help themselves to the office stationery cupboard. So, yes the phone calls will probably continue but hey they are people too who do in fact lead lives outside of work. But they might just be that bit happier and dedicated to the business. And everyone wins. ■

