

Through the Eyes of a Shoplifter

In the June 1968 issue of the magazine, then-managing editor John J. Sullivan tried his hand at shoplifting from a few independent stores, just to see how easy it was to get merchandise past the sales register.

He didn't have much trouble. With prior permission from the owners, he hit six stores in and around one city in one weekend, for a total of almost \$250 worth of merchandise in about an hour—more than \$1,700 today. Then-editor Bob Vereen got in on the experiment too, taking nearly \$25 worth of merchandise in about 10 minutes from one store.

The point wasn't, of course, to steal product from hardworking, honest hardware retailers. It was to show how easy it was to do so.

On Page 46, we talk about the importance of loss prevention and steps retailers can take to deter shoplifters from their stores. Take a look to find tips to help you tighten security in your business.

For a quick checklist you can share with your employees to make sure everyone is working to improve store security, visit nrha.org/freetraining and download our Loss Prevention Checklist.

Security Mirrors Didn't Stop Sullivan

In the story, Sullivan asks, "What's the message from all this?" The message, he says, wasn't to complain about careless employees or a faulty store layout. Instead, he said, "I'm telling it the way it is."

He wrote that while shoplifting cannot be completely stopped, it may be possible to find ways to make your store less attractive to shoplifters.

"Alert, trained, conscientious and *courageous* employees are part of the answer," he wrote. "Some of the people in the stores I visited suspected me, some might have even seen me pocket items. But no one stopped me."

"So-called 'security mirrors' don't help the retailer, in my opinion, as much as the shoplifter," he wrote. "I could use the mirrors to see if someone was watching me just as well as the employee could use them to keep an eye on me, and I could do it better because I had no distractions from other customers."

It all comes down to customer service. While you can't completely prevent shoplifting in your store, exceptional customer service can make it more difficult for a shoplifter to be successful. ➔



John J. Sullivan, then-managing editor of *Hardware Retailing*, stole two lawn mowers and several other products during a shoplifting experiment.

A Store-By-Store Look at John's Shoplifting Spree

