

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Protecting Your Competitive Advantage

Think your company's records, client contacts, and other confidential data are secure? Think again.

A recent survey conducted by Ponemon Institute and Symantec Corporation revealed that 59% of employees who lost or left a job last year made off with confidential company info. Worse yet, incidents of such theft are on the increase.

Today's culprits need neither cover of night, nor crowbars and master keys to commit their crime. In most cases, pilfering is conducted in plain sight, using portable media devices such as CDs, DVDs, and USB drives to download proprietary material—or email it to a personal account.

An even more disturbing finding: Only 15% of companies conduct an audit or review of the paper and electronic records being removed by a parting employee. Nearly 90% fail to do an electronic scan of the employee's portable media devices.

Given the ever-burgeoning volume of sensitive company records stored electronically, and the pressure of our current economic climate, it's more



QUICK TAKE

- Information is a valuable asset in today's knowledge-based economy
- To prevent theft, companies need to create policies and conduct regular audits

urgent than ever before for employers to take aggressive steps to prevent theft.

The first step is to make sure your company has written policies, procedures, and employment agreements that specifically address ownership of information, as well as the appropriate use of your workplace computer resources.

But policies alone aren't enough protection. Employers need to monitor compliance by conducting regular audits of employee computer use. It's also a good idea to invest in content-filtering and blocking software that's specifically designed to keep confidential information secure.



Despite those best efforts, thefts can and do occur. In such cases, both Michigan and federal statutes provide employers with a legal means of recovering stolen data, and imposing civil and criminal sanctions.

As the economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based, your company's information may be its most valuable asset. A policy or contract language cannot prevent theft—but it can lay the foundation for successful legal action against the perps. Call the author or Kathryn L. Ossian, 313.496.7644, for help.

Electronic Discovery + Records Management
B. Jay Yelton III 269.383.5819

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