



The Secret to Streamlined Cash Management in Amusement & Entertainment

**Practical Error & Theft Prevention Strategies
for Your Small Business**



Cash control in your facility is one of the most critical elements of your business and the front-line strategy for protecting yourself from external and internal errors and theft.

This guide discusses the most common vulnerabilities for amusement, adventure, and fit-tainment companies and some smart rules and best practices you can employ to prevent losses whether mistaken or intentional.

#1 **Obscure the Movement of Cash**

The movement of cash in your facility is crucial and processes must be designed for cash security and to safeguard your team. Potential thieves pay close attention to how and when you move cash through your facility and size up your processes for weak spots. That's why it's wise to move your cash inconspicuously.

For example, instead of placing cash in bank bags, consider using less obvious methods of transport such as lunch boxes, coolers, tool boxes, or even bags or backpacks from your retail or merchandise center. Vary your transport methods so that anyone watching won't be able to determine patterns in the way you move cash. Also, instead of cashiers calling for change, consider using code words such as asking for more cookies, more light bulbs or more ticket stock. The less obvious the cash exchange, the better.

It's easy to get into a routine that follows the same path in your facility or happens at the same time every day or every week. Avoid strict habits and, instead, vary the times you move cash and the routes your cash managers take between stations, the cash room, the door and even the bank.

#2 **Limit Access to Cash Tills, Cash Rooms & Banks**

As part of your cash control system, limit your employees' access to tills, the cash room and your banks, and never assign more than one employee to these duties at a time. It is even recommended that you prohibit manager overrides so that each cash handling team member has sole responsibility for the transactions and cash maintained in their till and drawer. Consider writing up an official cash handling agreement document to clearly set expectations with your team and ensure they understand their responsibilities when it comes to discrepancies.

The goal of all this, of course, is to maintain the integrity of each till and provide accountability for overages or shortages. Consider using a station with two or more stacked cash drawers so that team members can cover breaks and unscheduled movement away from assigned workstations. Each team member should be provided with their own bank/tray insert which only they can access, and all transactions should be tracked separately in each team member's till under their unique ID.

In a full-service food and beverage scenario, each server would be responsible for storing their own media, including cash and credit card receipts. A workstation can be configured to automatically remove tills after each transaction so that several servers may share one workstation without having any cash drawers connected to that station. At the end of the shift, each server can then be cashed out based on their individual transactions by collecting from them the amount of media totaled on their till report.

#3 Insist on Accountability

Accountability is the most important part of keeping all cash secure. With only one till and bank assigned per person, there is no excuse for team members' overages and shortages. A single cash manager should be assigned for each shift. This is the only person who should be issuing tills, accessing the safe, making change, working with team members to count banks down at shift end, performing cash drops and making the deposits. This tactic adds a double layer of accountability for the cash in your facility.

With generic tills, revenue and transactions cannot be tracked, accountability is nonexistent and point of sale is not utilized to its full potential. Here's an example: Let's say two team members are working on one station and sharing a bank. At the end of their shift, you find the drawer \$40 short. You may know that Jamil, a longtime team member, is never short while Jessica, a new hire, has had some previous discrepancies. The problem with this situation is that even if you have a feeling about who is right and who is wrong, you can't prove who made the mistake and therefore cannot hold anyone accountable. This practice creates a significant loophole for any team member to potentially steal from you in the future.

▶ **Without a single responsible party for each cash till, there is no legal recourse for cash shortages.**

#4 Install Security Cameras

There should be security cameras in all areas where cash is handled, including at each point of sale station, your Events office, your cash room and any other place in the facility where cash is kept.

At the POS and Events Office, cameras should be placed so that you can see cashier till operations, guest cash handling (if possible), the bank drawer and the overall movement of cash.

In the cash room, all cash counting should be visible, as well as the cash manager and team member. Video should also capture all transactions with the safe. A good rule of thumb is to keep at least 90 days' worth of security camera footage to reference. If you find a discrepancy, you'll have a good amount of history to cross check to determine how widespread the issue really is.

#5 Watch for Weaknesses

Most theft is caught either by accident or by another team member noticing and reporting unusual activity. Keep an eye on the following areas where internal theft commonly occurs:

Misuse of Voided Transactions

In this scenario, a team member enters items into the point of sale to calculate a total and then proceeds to void out the transaction. Next, the employee enters a smaller transaction, but takes payment on the original (larger) amount and pockets the difference.

An easy way to combat this kind of theft is to require guest receipts to print for every transaction and to install signage about receipts being required so that your guests know to expect them. Also, you may consider making a rule that all voided transactions require a manager's approval.

If you believe this type of abuse is happening, review your software's sales receipt detail reports. These are individual sales reports that capture every transaction by receipt number, payment method and time. Look for similar transactions that occurred at approximately the same time and see if one was voided. If you discover any suspicious voids, you'll need to review your security footage to determine whether an error or a theft occurred. As an isolated incident, this infraction may seem minor, but the truth is that this type of theft rarely happens just once. Investigate entire shifts and often patterns will surface.

Misuse of Discounts

Discounts can easily be abused by team members and therefore need to be managed. Abuse can occur by a team member applying discounts on items purchased by friends or family members. This also applies to an abuse of coupons, where a team member applies a coupon for a guest's transaction when one was not presented.

To combat discount abuse, consistently review discount reports to look for red flags, such as a cashier with an unusually high number of discounts applied. This can highlight the need for in-depth research with camera footage to uncover abuse.

Additionally, two or more team members may work together to intentionally ring up items inaccurately, such as only charging a friend for one slice of pizza but giving them an entire pie. To stop this type of theft, require team members to keep receipts for their shift meals and periodically spot check those receipts.

Misuse of Security Rights

Always be cognizant of which team members possess security rights that could allow them to manipulate employee records. With this ability, these team members can change passwords and pin numbers, and can log information that allows them to deploy the software in someone else's name. This may even include the creation of fictitious team members with general manager access. Once the team member has access with an alias, they can perform several kinds of abuse and/or theft including cashier sale theft, discount theft and returns, to name a few.

There are two ways to prevent this situation. First, closely review till summary reports for the day in order to verify that each till reporting team member actually worked during the time period. Next, review audit logs inside your software to view employee record changes and who specifically made those changes.

#6 Have a Clearly Defined Process

Having a clearly defined process with the team gives them confidence that the process is secure and that overages or shortages will be handled appropriately. For example, your cash room should be kept clean and neat and should be in a secure location with cameras. You should maintain a space for counting banks and for team members to count their starting and closing banks with the cash manager at the beginning and end of their shifts.

Here are two sample Policies and Procedures statements for smart cash handling:

Cash Manager Responsibilities (One Per Shift)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Counts safe completely at start of shift 2. Issues tills and banks to team members 3. Has team members count cash bank to verify starting amount 4. Performs regular cash drops to their till during a shift 5. Has a set remaining cash amount 6. Counts safe before all deposits | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Provides all change for team members 8. Issues new tills and banks, even to team members working double shifts 9. At cash-out, Cash Manager and Team Member count and verify cash together in the cash room, one Team Member at a time 10. Makes the deposit at close of shift | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Day Cash Manager and Night Cash Manager have a safe count to hand off 12. Night Cash Manager repeats steps 1-10 13. At closing, the Night Cash Manager should ensure all events have been finalized for the day 14. Checks to make sure all team members are clocked out and makes note of discrepancies |
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Team Member Responsibilities

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One team member is assigned to each till and bank 2. Always locks station when not in use 3. Always requests change from a manager, not from another team member | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Always counts all wrapped packs of 1's and 5's 5. Always counts change back to the guest 6. When receiving cash from a guest, lays the bill across the drawer - not | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> in it - until after counting the change back 7. Keeps bills organized and tidy – ideally back facing – to prevent wrongful placement |
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Key Takeaway

Foster an aware environment where you and your team are diligent about noticing suspicious activity and reporting it, and maintain an open-door policy where team members can come to you with concerns.



About CenterEdge Software

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