

How to Identify Lying Employees



Let's be honest: Everybody lies. More often than not, though, they're the harmless "white lie" variety we tell to be polite, avoid confrontation, or spare someone's feelings. Indeed, we lie pretty much every day; One eye-opening study found that most people lie at least once daily. What's more, a Time Magazine article uncovered research that asserts human beings, through a variety of mediums, can hear up to 200 lies a day.

For sure, lying can occur anywhere and anytime. It's the lies that occur at work, however, that most concern business owners. Studies show that a culture of workplace lying can lead to increases in theft, fraud, and turnover while similarly hurting productivity, revenue, and morale.

Identifying Lying Employees

Clearly, it's of the utmost importance for owner-operators to maintain a culture of honesty and accountability. But what if you struggle to decipher falsehoods and read body language? How can you determine when an employee is lying? HR professionals and experts offer the following eight common, tell-tale signs that your employees may be trying to pull a fast one:

Responding to a question with a question – When asked a direct question, an employee with nothing to hide will simply provide a direct answer. A lying employee, on the other hand, will respond with another question. If asked, for example, "Were you near the cash drawer at the time of the incident?" the deceptive employee would respond, "Cash drawer? Why would I be near the cash drawer?" instead of just answering yes or no.

Hyper-swearing – If asked a question that seems accusatory, the employee will respond with over-the-top statements such as, "I place my hand on a stack of bibles" or "I swear on my grandfather's life," "As God as my witness," etc.

Using defensive body language – When being questioned or interviewed, a dishonest employee will display defensive, protective body language such as covering their mouth with their hands, avoiding direct eye contact, fidgeting excessively, or shifting their body away from the questioner.

Hedges on consequences – When asked what they think the consequences should be, an honest employee will indicate that the punishment should fit the crime. The employee with something to hide, however, will often

hedge: "It depends on the situation; Everybody makes mistakes; People do things for a variety of reasons; I'm not judging anyone; Everyone deserves a second chance."

Righteous indignation – An employee with a guilty conscience often feigns outrage at the mere thought of their honesty being questioned. Common responses might include, "How could you accuse me of such a thing?" or "Why is it that management never trusts their employees?" rather than a straight answer.

Deflection to another employee – Lying employees sometimes attempt to deflect or direct suspicion to someone else. If asked, "Did you take the credit card?" a common response would might be, "Of course I not! Why don't you ask Jenny? There's a good chance she knows something about it."

Confusion over the timeline – Employees with something to hide usually get tripped up when asked to recount events. They'll either remember things out of order, leave out key details, or flat out draw a blank when asked to recall specific moments.

Voice-pitch change – The stress of lying can cause the vocal cords to constrict. So, if an employee's voice starts cracking, the pitch goes way up or down, or they start excessively clearing their throat, it may indicate that you have a liar on your hands.

An urgent care that has employees who lie to cover up mistakes and errors, ditch work, spread rumors, mislead patients, and deceive each other can eventually find itself struggling to operate effectively – which of course hinders its primary purpose of serving patients.

Alan A. Ayers, MBA, MAcc is Vice President of Strategic Initiatives for Practice Velocity, LLC

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