

The James W. Bassett Company, Inc.

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CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Mr. Ted Purcell, Security Director
Fuel & Grubb Convenience Stores
Via email: Ted@F&G.com

Re: Shortage Questionnaire™ Results – Store #17

Mr. Purcell:

Below are the results of my analyses of the Shortage Questionnaires™ submitted from Store #17.

Summary

Employees' SQ™ answers paint a picture of a badly broken operation at Fuel & Grubb Store #17. The previous manager was unable to cope with this store's inventory shortages and employee morale problems. So he quit trying. He was replaced by the present manager, Monique Weber.

Ms. Weber is wishing she never accepted the manager's job at #17. She thinks she has bitten off more than she can chew. She may be right.

Employee morale at #17 is very low. Employees report that customers use every scheme imaginable to "get over" on them because the previous manager allowed employees to give discounts on store merchandise. Typical ploys include customers claiming their credit cards don't work in the pumps and driving off without paying, routinely begging for discounts, and shoplifting whenever they see cashiers are not watching them.

Shoplifting and drive-offs are easy at this store because many cashiers don't care if customers steal. Customers are ignored unless they approach a cash register. Some employees believe they have no responsibility for spotting shoplifters.

There is a general perception that employee training is inadequate, even though Ms. Weber feels she is doing a good job training her employees.

Most employees believe they are overworked and underpaid. They feel unappreciated, unnoticed and put upon. The attitudes of some go beyond apathy; they are downright hostile toward Fuel & Grubb.

Employees describe working in this store as "being in a war zone." Since customers have received unauthorized discounts in the past, they have come to believe they are still entitled. Some customers become argumentative and threaten clerks when they are refused discounts.

Some of the employees in #17 are stealing to get even with Fuel & Grubb for putting them in this situation. Many believe their jobs are of little value and are thinking about quitting.

Employees offered suggestions on their Shortage Questionnaires for security improvements. These suggestions include installing security cameras aimed at the gas pumps, installing mirrors to make blind spots visible, and replacing the weekend security guard. Employees report the security guard spends most of his time socializing with customers, many of whom are his friends from the neighborhood. They claim he is doing nothing to prevent thefts by customers or employees.

Third shift is a big source of the shortage. The assistant manager who runs third shift is a long-term employee who seems to have given up. She has seen employees steal but has done nothing.

Reports for individual employees appear below.

Monique Weber (Manager – 5 Mos.)

Ms. Weber reports employees don't look at the pumps before authorizing customers' gas purchases. She claims to have caught some of them guessing merchandise prices and "voiding but not ringing." She also believes some employees are "putting items in different categories" or ringing up on the wrong product keys.

Ms. Weber names Carol, Kirstin, Rochelle and Matt as current employees she suspects of helping cause the shortage, but does not explain why.

Ms. Weber's answers indicate she is not stealing from #17. She appears to be a perfectionist who works very hard and blames herself for the shortages. Her employees vouch for her honesty. Ms. Weber resents "being left this mess from the prior manager."

Since she has not been able to stem the shortages from this store during the past five months, it is improbable that she will ever be able to do so. You might think about sending her to a store that she can handle before she quits in disgust. Why lose a good manager?

Susan Blake (3rd Shift – 3 Mos.)

Ms. Blake's SQ is the best of the employees who work in this store. Her positive attitudes toward your company are a rarity. She is happy with her wages and believes she is being treated fairly. She wrote,

"We need a more aggressive security guard. The one we have never makes anyone rowdy leave the store and he never appears to be watching for shoplifters. I feel because he knows people, he will not prosecute them."

Ms. Blake suspects a co-worker named Matt of helping cause the shortage because he is "always on phone with personal calls, eats merchandise without paying and he's always taking breaks or in the bathroom." She also suspects Cody of stealing. She stated that Cody recently quit without notice when asked about discrepancies. Ms. Blake, herself, is not stealing from store #17.

Matthew Wagner (2nd and 3rd Shifts – 2 Mos.)

Most people do not start a job with the intention of stealing. Mr. Wagner is an exception. Every employee who works in this store knows Mr. Wagner is stealing. Why is he still there?

Mr. Wagner admitted to eating \$30 worth of hot dogs during the shortage period without paying for them. The hotdogs are just the tip of Mr. Wagner's personal theft iceberg, but enough to fire him without paying unemployment compensation.

Some of Mr. Wagner's explanations to the questions on the SQ show why Fuel & Grubb should not have hired him:

"I *may have* incorrectly rung up stuff before when unsure of the price."

"I stole a pack of cigarettes for Cody and had Cody steal a pack for me once. It was a 'trust pact' so each wouldn't turn on the other."

"I was fired from Bunker Hill's for a bag of chips I forgot to pay for."

"I took a test to be employed by Modern Mart before and came up high risk."

If Modern Mart eliminated Mr. Wagner from employment with a pre-employment honesty test, maybe Fuel & Grubb could do the same thing. Eliminate those applicants who intend to steal before they can affix themselves to your payroll.

Shannon Gentry (Food Service Manager – 12 Yrs.)

Ms. Gentry's responses indicate no significant theft on her part. Frustrated with the "headaches" in this store, she is thinking about quitting. That would be a big loss. Ms. Gentry claims to have seen Matt and Rochelle eating food without paying for it.

Nicole Donner (2nd Shift – 3 Mos.)

Ms. Donner works "minimal hours." Apparently, she is a college student nearing graduation. She does not know anything about who is stealing, and her SQ answers indicate she has not stolen from #17.

Kirstin Minor (2nd and 3rd Shifts – 1 Yr.)

In addition to stealing and ignoring customers who steal, Ms. Minor is the poster child for employees in this store with negative attitudes. When asked to select which factors contributed to the shortage, here are a few of the ones she chose:

- Employees not caring about the company or their work. Ms. Minor's explanation: "They don't care about us, why should we?"
- Employees letting friends/relatives hang around inside store. Ms. Minor's explanation: "Sometimes we aren't busy. Why not?"
- Employees giving away merchandise or unauthorized discounts. Ms. Minor's explanation: "Sometimes they just want coffee, so we just coupon it out."
- Employees failing to report gas drive-offs by customers or other employees. Ms. Minor's explanation: "It's a pain! And it doesn't do any good."

When asked whether she was wishing she never went to work for Fuel & Grubb, she answered "Strongly Agree" and explained, "Awful pay, disrespectful customers, the whole job."

Ms. Minor admits to stealing only about \$2 worth of drinks, which she thinks "should be free anyway because we work there."

She claimed to know six employees who stole during the shortage period. However, she only named two of them – Cody, who stole phone cards, and Matt, who stole "cigarettes and whatever he could."

Rochelle Fallon (1st Shift – 5 Mos.)

Ms. Fallon believes employees aren't treated fairly, the company expects employees to work too hard, and employees aren't trained properly. She thinks employees are stealing merchandise, money, and giving unauthorized discounts. She claims to be aware of employees allowing friends and relatives to loiter in the store, but chose not to give details.

Ms. Fallon suspects Danese and Shannon of stealing, but does not explain why. She also leaves most of her SQ answers unexplained and some of the questions unanswered. Her half-hearted effort at answering these questions may be a reflection of how she performs her job.

Ms. Fallon does not care whether you think she has stolen from #17 or not. She only cares what you can prove. When an employee only cares what you can prove, she is invariably stealing. Such is the case with Ms. Fallon.

Liz Tanner (2nd Shift – 3 Mos.)

Ms. Tanner is a senior in high school. Her Shortage Questionnaire answers indicate she might be bringing her "senior slump" to work at #17.

Her answers do not indicate significant theft on her part. However, her answers do reveal lack of judgment, a very limited attention span, and a half-hearted effort to perform the duties of her job. You may want to point Ms. Tanner in a different occupational direction based on these answers she provided:

- Regarding giving away merchandise, she stated "I give away senior discounts." (Do these discounts go to her classmates or to the elderly?)
- She admitted allowing customers to take "\$8.84" worth of merchandise explaining, "A woman always comes in for cigarettes and says she pays Allison for it the next day."
- When asked if she made mistakes that might have helped cause the shortage, Ms. Tanner wrote, "I think I might have rung phone cards up wrong or forgot to ring some up."
- When asked how much of the shortage she thought she caused altogether, she wrote "\$75" and explained "I don't think I ring some products up right."

Ms. Tanner admitted to failing to check in vendors properly "two times" and explained, "Sometimes I just look over it quickly but not properly."

In addition she wrote: "When prices aren't marked, I sometimes guess the price." She also said, "Sometimes I give customers too much change back. Most customers realize my mistakes and give money back."

Ms. Tanner admitted customers drove off on her 6-15 times during the shortage period and explained, "I think it's because people say they paid with credit but their cards don't work on the pump and they have to come in and pay."

Cynthia Soebel (3rd Shift, Asst. Mgr. – 19 Mos.)

Although her co-workers don't say she is stealing, Ms. Soebel's SQ answers say she is. She is resentful because she is a "person doing more work than others getting a very small pay raise."

When asked if employees giving away merchandise had been a cause of the shortage, she wrote, "Have seen this done." Ms. Soebel fails to identify any employees she knows are stealing, but claims knowledge of employees stealing money by failing to ring up sales.

After claiming she took no more than \$5 worth of food that she didn't pay for during the shortage, she offered this intriguing answer to the question below:

SQ Question: "Could there be some money or merchandise that you have borrowed or taken from the store during the shortage period that you did not include in the totals above?"

Ms. Soebel's answer: "Not sure". Her explanation was "maybe but never intentional."

SQ Question: "If an investigator told me he was sure I caused this shortage, I would NOT take it personally because he would just be doing his job."

Ms. Soebel's answer: Ms. Soebel selected "Barely Agree" and her explanation was "*I may have.*"

Ms. Soebel has stolen more during the shortage period than she admits and has seen other employees stealing that she has failed to report. Do you want Ms. Soebel running third shift? Do you want her handling your company's money?

Carol Cook (1st and 2nd Shifts – 2 Yrs.)

Ms. Cook's attitudes toward your company are very negative. So negative, in fact, they must be affecting her co-workers as well.

She starts out admitting the theft of \$2.45 worth of merchandise during the shortage period. When asked later on the same page if there was other merchandise or money that she stole during the shortage period, she marked "Not Sure". When again asked for a dollar estimate of her total theft during the shortage period, she answered, "Not Sure."

Here are some other interesting answers offered by Ms. Cook on her SQ:

- She believes that catching customers who try to shoplift is not a part of her job.
- She believes she might have a part in causing this shortage because "I make mistakes." Why, after two years on this job, is Ms. Cook still making "mistakes?" Maybe her mistakes are intentional.
- She does not know what an investigator would conclude if he/she questioned her about whether she caused a significant part of this shortage.
- She does not know if her answers on the shortage questionnaire indicate whether she has stolen significant amounts from store #17.
- She does not know how often she came up significantly over or short during the shortage period.

Her answers indicate significant theft on Ms. Cook's part.

Mike Mantra (2nd Shift – 7 Mos.)

Mr. Mantra said he is cashiering one day per week and "working an AA program" for alcohol and drug addiction. According to Kirk Kendall, the district manager, Mr. Mantra has said that he is dyslexic. However, I see no indication of this infirmity in his

SQ answers. In fact, his reading comprehension appears to be better than most of his co-workers.

Mr. Mantra admitted that he has stolen in the past, but did not say when or from whom. He also stated that he is experiencing some bouts with stress on this job.

He admits giving \$5-\$10 worth of hot dogs to the “less fortunate usually the older ones.” (Is it the hot dogs or elderly customers that are the “older ones”?)

When asked how much of the shortage he thinks he has caused due to mistakes or deliberately, he answered “\$100,” but his explanation is more interesting:

“I have bad days in my recovery of alcohol and drugs that cause me not to focus too well. I know I’ve given too much change to people, realized late I didn’t ring an item or two up, stuff like that nobody is perfect that’s an understatement when I’m having a bad day.”

Mr. Mantra is not only prone to run-on sentences, but is also an unhappy camper. He believes the company does not treat employees fairly and explained, “Not in the long run little money lots of stress we deal with the disease of the planet – the human race.”

He also believes everyone who works in this store had a hand in causing the shortage because “Stress and pay don’t equal out.”

The following question and Mr. Mantra’s answer suggest he is experiencing temptation to dip into the till:

SQ Question: “I might look guilty just because I thought about stealing something from this place once.”

Mr. Mantra’s answer: He selected “Strongly Agree” and explained, “My disease of addiction has me thinking lots of crazy (expletive) but I just can’t act on it. One day, one shift at a time.”

Based on his answers, I do not think Mr. Mantra has stolen from #17 during the shortage period. However, I wonder if handling money in a store that sells alcoholic beverages is the best place for him to affect a recovery from substance abuse.

If you have any questions about this report or wish to discuss further, give me a call.

Sincerely,

James W. Bassett