

Certification Has Tremendous Benefits for Law Enforcement

Why did you decide to pursue certification? Was there something specific that influenced your decision?

I started my career with the St. Petersburg Police Department in 1999. In 2001 I became an investigator assigned to the auto theft unit. In 2002 I transferred to the property recovery unit and shortly thereafter became involved with the Florida Law Enforcement Property Recovery Unit (FLEPRU) where I met Detective Jack Gee, who is now retired from the Ft. Lauderdale Police Department. Jack was president of FLEPRU at that time.

In 2008 Jack and other loss prevention professionals noticed an increase in organized retail crime (ORC) and felt it was necessary to encourage mutual cooperation between all law enforcement agencies and retail corporations throughout the United States to address this problem. This resulted in the creation of the Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail (CLEAR). Since its inception, I have been the training codirector for the organization. This opportunity opened my eyes to how important it is for law enforcement and retail to learn about each other, so they can effectively work together.

I decided to complete the LPQ course because I felt that using the knowledge learned from the coursework will allow me to further my investigative skills and make me a better partner to retail.

Was the course what you expected?

The LPQ course was so much more than I expected. As a law enforcement investigator, there are many things that we do not think about when we are conducting a retail theft investigation.

Tell us more about the process of going through the coursework and taking the exam.

The course gives anyone, with or without a retail background, the basic information needed to understand the basics of retail and retail loss prevention. Having the Gopher Study Notes was very helpful in studying for the test. My advice to test takers is to study and take your time reading and answering the test questions.

Looking at your own personal development, what information within the course helped you the most?

Understanding the retail loss prevention process and terminology learned in this course work will help my personal development by allowing me to better

Interview with Mitzi Perry, LPQ



Mitzi Perry, LPQ, has been an investigator at the St. Petersburg (Florida) Police Department since 1999. In 2001 she was assigned to the auto theft unit and in 2002 transferred to the property recovery unit. Perry is the current president of the Florida Law Enforcement Recovery Unit (FLEPRU), training codirector for the Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail (CLEAR), and secretary for the Florida Organized Retail Crime Association (FLAORCA). She received her LPQ certification in January 2017.

communicate with other loss prevention professionals because now we will be speaking the same language.

What was the most eye-opening information that was part of the curriculum?

The biggest eye-opening information from the curriculum were the shrink calculations and the true effects of shrink on the retail business.

What benefits have you seen from taking the course?

I will now have the ability to draw on my knowledge, experiences, and observations when providing guidance and thoughtful opinions on the wide variety of issues impacting the retail industry and to enhance the capabilities of my peers within both the public and private sectors through organizations such as FLEPRU, CLEAR, and FLAORCA. I will continue to work hard in breaking down the barriers. It has also given me lots ideas for topics for this year's CLEAR and FLEPRU conferences.

If you could offer one key takeaway to someone currently considering getting certified, what would it be?

This course is a must for new or even experienced loss prevention professionals and law enforcement. Not only do you learn many aspects of the fundamentals of retail loss prevention, but also it shows others that you are a committed loss prevention professional or someone who is committed to partnering with the LP industry.

How has going through the certification process influenced the way that you approach your job?

This course has reinforced how important it is for law enforcement to share their knowledge with other law enforcement investigators and patrol officers. We need to retrain how law enforcement looks at retail theft.

Many times law enforcement responds and investigates a retail theft call for a highly desirable item. Generally, law enforcement's response to the problem is, "Why don't they just lock that item up?" This course has given me a better understanding as to why or why not an item is locked up and how that decision impacts sales and shrink.

We also need to retrain officers responding to these calls. They need to know if they are responding to a call involving a professional or amateur shoplifter. When making a traffic stop, they need to know what some of the indicators are when they have detained someone who may be involved in ORC?

How would you compare certification to other educational courses that you've taken?

Most of the other work-related courses I have taken have been on company time. Completing this certification coursework and studying was a little more challenging because I completed it on my own time. I did it in addition to working my regular job, volunteering commitments, and home life. But it was definitely well worth it.

As a law enforcement professional who has never worked LP in a retail store, going through the LPQ certification process has shown me how much more there is to know about the retail process and retail loss prevention. It has also shown me there is still so much more to learn.

Do you think getting certified will help make you a better law enforcement professional?

Having completed the LPQ or LPC coursework shows others that you are a dedicated and educated loss prevention professional, and it gives you the advantage over others that have not completed the coursework. The coursework covers more than just loss prevention. It helps give you an understanding of labor laws, human resources, understanding and resolving conflict, and other topics that many may not immediately associate with loss prevention.

As a law enforcement professional who has never worked LP in a retail store, going through the LPQ certification process has shown me how much more there is to know about the retail process and retail loss prevention. It has also shown me there is still so much more to learn. And I look forward to taking the LPC course in the future. I feel this will make me a well-rounded property crimes investigator.

Would you recommend certification to others?

I would definitely recommend the LPQ and LPC certifications to others. Completion of this coursework serves

as a benchmark of your knowledge and will help the LP professional earn the respect of others in the process, just as it helps law enforcement better partner with retail.

Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the learning experience?

The coursework discusses the importance of networking. I could not agree more. I have had many opportunities to network with other law enforcement investigators and retail loss prevention professionals through local meetings and with the associations I am involved with. These individuals have become great partners. Others have become good friends and mentors.

I would like to take a moment to thank Mark Neapolitan, LPC, CFI, with Signet Jewelers and John Clark with PCI Services for their support and encouragement of my decision to complete the LPQ coursework.

Newly Certified

Following are individuals who recently earned their certifications.

Recent LPC Recipients

Cory Arnsperger, LPC, Sears Holdings
Gregory Bleakley, LPC CFI, Office Depot
Robert Cochran, LPC, Rite Aid
Britt Davidson, LPC, Kum & Go
Bradley Donatille, LPC, Sears Holdings
Jacob Feldhaus, LPC, Blain's Supply
Jason Fiszer, LPC, Office Depot
James Freeman, LPC, Lowe's
Mark Hand, LPC, Lowe's
Brian Keefer, LPC, Regis Corporation
Kristen Kurek, LPC, Sears Holdings
Frederick Lipscomb, LPC, Rite Aid
Sarah McCoin, LPC, CFI, Hibbett Sporting Goods
Kazuya Ohara, LPC, Sears Holdings
Dennis Pruitt, LPC, Lowe's
Jacob Russell, LPC, Blain Supply
Randall Stirewalt, LPC, Walmart
Christine Sullivan, LPC, Kum & Go
David Swift, LPC, H&M
Armando Velasquez, LPC, Goodwill Industries of Orange County
Dustin Young, LPC, Kum & Go

Recent LPQ Recipients

Nathan Cordero, LPQ, Kmart
Jeffrey Gonzalez, LPQ, Walmart
Marc Hamilton, LPQ, ShopRite
Adrienne Holliday, LPQ, Goodwill Industries of the Columbia
Wesley Justice, LPQ, TJX
Douglas Lopez, LPQ
Mitzi Perry, LPQ, St. Petersburg Police Department
Brittany Phillippy, LPQ, Lowe's
Stephen Ragosta, LPQ, Westcott Properties
Philipp Reinecke, LPQ, Starbucks Coffee
Clinton Sprenger, LPQ, Pineland Co-op ■