

De-escalation Training Program Addresses Disruptive Behaviors

Addressing disruptive customer behavior and de-escalation training efforts has become a topic of great interest to retailers across the globe amidst growing concern over the challenges and opportunities for safety in retail stores. The subject was discussed in great detail at the September 2016 Loss Prevention Foundation's (LPF) board of directors meeting, where all LPF board member companies agreed that there was a pressing need to address the concerns of disruptive behavior and respond with a solution that would benefit the entire retail industry, our associates, and the retail customer. This resulted in the LPF decision to spearhead the effort to create a retail-focused de-escalation training program for the retail industry.

With a reputation for creating world-class interactive training initiatives, such as the academically accepted and internationally known LPCertified and LPQualified retail certification programs and other courses focused on topics important to the industry, creating a course that involves the development—and approval—of industry leaders and subject-matter experts is essential to earning the LPF “stamp of approval,” as a new LPF-certified certificate course, and vital to building a program that best meets the needs of the retail industry.

Efforts to build a de-escalation training course that would best fit these needs were put in motion before the meeting even adjourned, with an emphasis on developing a solution that matches the essentials of the training with the challenges of the retail environment. Creating a program that united retail knowledge and experience with subject-matter expertise in addressing disruptive behaviors was determined to be the best course of action, leading to the most positive and productive outcomes. *Addressing Disruptive Behaviors in Retail—Essentials* will be the first among several titles in development and launching under the new LPF-certified designation.

Leading the Way

As a strong and long-standing advocate for promoting and improving safety in retail, the Walmart asset protection team quickly stepped up and took the lead as the initial sponsor in supporting this very important industry initiative to help make the program available for asset protection professionals across the country—and beyond. The Walmart AP team has been engaged with the LPF and industry subject-matter experts in developing this essential educational resource, which will be released soon.

“We feel very strongly about our commitment to safety at Walmart. It is one of our corporate core values,” said Tom Arigi, senior director of asset protection for Walmart. “This commitment extends beyond our doors; and we see this as a terrific opportunity to reach out across

by Gene Smith, LPC



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the industry to partner with and support our retail counterparts in driving a message of safety for every professional in our industry.”

Walmart will also utilize this courseware internally to help further promote their mission for safety in their stores. It will serve as required training for both their asset protection and management teams, including store managers and other key front-end associates.

The program is being developed under the guidance and direction of Jesse Stanley with Strongside Principles, a former loss prevention professional and nationally-known speaker and subject-matter expert on de-escalation techniques. Strongside has extensive roots and experience in retail, with larger retail clients already engaging with Strongside's approach. Stanley also serves as a subject-matter expert supporting internal training and policy development, with teachings and skills that are very retail-centric. Unlike other de-escalation training that is drawn from law enforcement experience, practice, and principles, the expertise of Strongside was selected by LPF as recommended by several retail leaders and current board members as the preferred method and approach focusing on the business of retail.

Defining the Problem

“Disruptive behaviors are intended to cause harm to others, whether trying to hurt someone, make them feel inferior, or simply damaging their reputation,” explained Stanley. “While customer service may be a prominent message for retailers, on any given day you're likely to deal with insults, profanity, and other forms of aggressive and non-compliant behavior. Effectively addressing disruptive behaviors involves being able to identify, avoid, and respond to them—even when it involves common but less severe behaviors like rudeness and intimidation. However, all too often it's our own employees' actions that customers use to justify their behaviors.

“De-escalation training that helps us better deal with such disruptive behaviors—learning to use tactics that work and avoiding those that don't, how to effectively organize your thoughts, and responding from a position of strength—therefore becomes essential to safer and more successful interactions with your customers.

“When we started working on this with clients back in 2010, we saw challenges: companies dissatisfied with how difficult customers were handled and employees feeling powerless. Today, we see opportunity. Loss prevention is leading the way, helping retailers improve customer service, promote safety and strengthen brands,” said Stanley.

Creating a Best-in-Class Solution

The partnership of industry leaders and subject-matter experts will produce a best-in-class product that leads the way in improving safety

for retail loss prevention. The LPF is honored to be the conduit in bringing together this group of professionals who all share a passion for safety and to support the creation of this education resource that will be available to every company and every retail associate.

Nothing is more important than the safety of our industry associates, our management teams, and every retail customer. We would be remiss in our mission if we did not actively support and address these concerns by bringing forward this valuable resource and supporting the safety of our membership and every professional in our industry.

This certificate-based, interactive, online training program, focused on the retail environment, featuring industry-centric examples and exercises, for and from a variety of retail environments, is in its final stages of development and will be released to the industry at large by early summer 2017.

Newly Certified

Following are individuals who recently earned their certifications.

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Margaret Chapman, LPC, Lowe's
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