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Certification

The LP Industry Goes Back to School

Many of today's seasoned LP professionals, including this writer, honed and earned our LP education on the front line, learning the industry as we went and growing with the fast-changing environment. While that "learn-as-you-grow" education was once the norm, it is becoming exceedingly rare in today's complex LP world. Simply put—things have changed.

Gone are the days when the primary functions of the LP department were physical controls, dishonest associates, shoplifters, and shrink. No longer is the sheer quantity of resolved cases and a good shrink number a valid gauge of effectiveness.

Today's fast-changing, high-stakes, technology-laden world has added new items on the LP plate, such as safety and risk, organized retail crime, fraud, data protection, crisis management, business continuity, supply-chain security, mobile technology, e-commerce, and workplace violence to name just a few.

In addition, today's LP is no longer an



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expense department, but rather a partner in the business, expected to manage large budgets and align the LP initiatives with company goals. It's a complex and heavy load. Today's industry leaders recognize that they need talent, and not just eager, energetic individuals with a good work ethic. Today's executives need educated talent—those who are intellectually equipped to hit the ground running and mentally prepared to take on the myriad roles and responsibilities facing LP professionals today.

Going Back to School

In order for students to arm themselves with the relevant courses that will help get them in the door to the LP industry, interest in our industry must be fostered early on. While many students become aware of the LP industry through professors or select courses, a number are learning about LP from industry professionals who have taken the time to visit colleges to talk to students about career offerings in the loss prevention industry, as well as dispel old notions and myths.



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Several retail trade associations and organizations are serving the industry by carving out a piece of their annual conferences to promote, educate, and introduce college students to the abundant opportunities this industry has to offer.

One such organization is the International Organization of Black Security Executives (IOBSE). An important part of the annual IOBSE conference is the student day that kicks off the week's events. The IOBSE is committed to not only teaching college students about the security and loss prevention industry through member visits to colleges, but they also afford a number of selected students the opportunity to attend their spring conference.

Those students selected must pass a rigorous vetting process that includes stringent GPA criteria and intense interviews with IOBSE committee members. The education committee members work to educate the selected students before the event. That hard work is quite evident in the caliber of the students who attend this conference. They come well-prepared to network and eagerly engage in conversation to tap into the career experiences of those professionals in attendance. The student day is full of valuable career instruction and guidance to help the students understand what choices

they have and how they can most enhance their career opportunities.

The IOBSE student program is one that truly embraces the spirit of mentorship and giving back and will continue to benefit the loss prevention industry by turning today's high-potential students into tomorrow's leaders.

Recruiting Tool

Another association striving to educate college students is the Retail Industry Leader's Association. RILA is once again offering a select group of college students the opportunity to learn more about LP, showcase their skills and knowledge to potential employers, and network with industry professionals through their College Student Program.

The students attending their conference this year in Orlando are sure to once again catch the attention of industry leaders looking to bring on college-educated talent. Students present a retail LP-related project in a session devoted to them. The attendance at last year's student session was outstanding. "The college student program is a recruiting tool," says Lisa LaBruno senior vice president of retail operations for RILA. "It exposes retailers and solution providers to talented and driven young people who are passionate about pursuing a career



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in retail asset protection. A number of last year's student participants were hired by retailers who met them at the conference."

Garth Gasse, RILA's new director of retail operations, AP, adds, "Short-term this program increases awareness about the retail AP industry, as well as the possible career opportunities it offers. Through participation in this significant research project and the partnerships it offers, high-potential college students are given the chance to learn all about the industry. Longer term, we hope that the program will generate interest in the AP field as a future career opportunity."

Foundation Partnership

The Loss Prevention Foundation proudly partners with IOBSE and RILA by providing LPQualified course and exam scholarships to give these students the added advantage of the LPQ designation—a certification preferred by over sixty companies nationwide.

As you make your plans to attend this year's spring conferences, consider the impact you could have on the industry by "going back to school" and engaging these students in conversation, networking with them, offering your experiences, and listening to their perspective

on current relevant topics presented in their session. For that small investment of your time and interest, you and the industry will both be enriched.