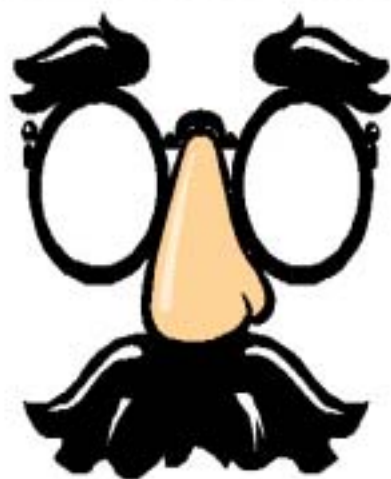


IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION



SCAMS & SCHEMES ▪ VICTIMS ▪ PRIVACY LAWS
POINTS OF ACCESS ▪ PREVENTION CHECKLISTS

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CERTIFIED FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINER

INTRODUCTION

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FRAUD

Remember throwing water balloons when we were kids? When holding the balloon in our hands we had something that had weight and substance to it. But when the balloon would burst, we would watch as the water fell through our fingers into the grass. The devices holding our assets and financial resources are more fragile than you might think. When we look at how some banks protect our money, “FDIC insured” sometimes seems to mean “Fraudulent Documents Instantly Cashéd”. Here are some common misconceptions about identity theft and fraud in general.

“It won’t happen to me”

More and more people are being victimized by identity theft and other fraud scams every day. I suppose if we were to just use cash all the time and hide out in a Montana cabin that we would be pretty much immune from white-collar crimes. But that’s not the way of life for most of us. So as we work, shop, use today’s technology and mix with other people in our world, sooner or later we will be pinched by fraud if we are not careful. If you think, “well, this has never happened to me before”, then you are in good company. I can’t tell you how many times that people present their fraud cases to me and say, “I can’t believe someone ripped me off; this has never happened to me before”.

“Only businesses should be concerned about fraud”

Indeed, businesses are a ripe target for fraud, but “John Q. Public” (that’s you) can also offer white-collar bandits a profitable day’s work. Every day in the newspapers around our country you can read stories about fraud. And those stories will report businesses and individuals who have both been victimized. So don’t let down your guard, don’t think yourself an unworthy target to criminals; you have retirement monies, real properties, personal properties and above all, you have a good name that can be abused by the unscrupulous. Protect your past, present and future good name now before it’s too late!

Folk Lore and wives tales from the “experts”

Folk lore is usually a mixture of some truth along with myth or at least a dash of wishful thinking. As in most walks of life, when it comes to Fraud Prevention, there are many good intentioned people offering bad advice. Oh, some of their advice is indeed good, but watch out for the cliff up ahead. For example, Ann Landers ran a column quoting a specialist on identity theft. Most of the advice was good advice in that column however, the very first point of advice could plant a time bomb for compliant readers. It stated, “Destroy papers you don’t need. This includes credit-card and ATM receipts, checks or deposit slips, health insurance benefit statements, paycheck stubs, tax records and pre-approved credit-card offers.” DANGER! Lets talk...

Throwing the baby out with the bath water is not always the best answer. In the larger picture of fraud, the people who follow this advice will destroy their best evidence to prove their innocence when and if fraud scams raise their ugly heads in the future. For example, **if you destroy credit card and ATM receipts, checks and deposit slips**, you dispose of examples of your true signature which may be used by forgers to create either a simulated, traced, or “cut-and-paste” forgery on a Will, Deed, Contract, or worse yet, an unlimited power of attorney (read my book; BUSINESS FRAUD; KNOW IT & PREVENT IT). Your retention of the original model will provide you all the proof you need to demonstrate that the bogus document is really a forgery. Without that model signature, a Jury may easily believe the crook’s story and award them your money or property. I have actually seen this happen!

Another piece of bad advice was by an identity theft specialist who claimed that virtually “*NO identity theft scams are being conducted on the Internet*”. Are you kidding? Even if you sleep through this book you will know what hogwash that is! The Internet is an extremely fertile field for scam artist of every kind. Be on your guard when receiving emails or visiting Web pages, bulletin boards or chat rooms.

Quoting another piece of lore, “*Lost and stolen wallets are the most common way imposters get your information*”. Sorry Charlie, but this is simply not true. Most of us do a pretty good job hanging onto our wallets and purses. Remember that today’s identity thieves have the

mail, trash, the Internet, the phone and many other ways to collect information about us. Coming across our wallet or purse would be a fortuitous, albeit rare occurrence for identity thieves.

And finally, *“Never give your social security number or personal information over the phone.”* Although I myself do not like giving any personal information over the phone, there are instances where we just have to. But remember this, the whole watershed test as to whether or not you should give your information over the phone is, WHO PLACED THE PHONE CALL? If someone called you, then don't give out your information. However, if you call to change utilities or if you call your bank to transfer funds, then it's OK to give out your personal information. How else will they know it's you?

Misinformation will lead you into trouble. Many people who become “specialists” and “experts” in certain niches start out by simply dabbling, writing, or even as concerned victims who want to warn others. I honestly believe that all of these people mean well, but they certainly do not bring a wealth of experience with them and unfortunately, do not give the complete picture. Make sure you take the advice of those who have been in their niche for many years and have dealt with issues in their field on all of the levels.

“The Credit Reporting Agencies will help me”

When it comes down to how the credit bureaus affect us personally, they seemingly have more power than the President of the United States and are more secretive and insulated than the CIA. Receiving a copy of your credit report is not too difficult on the one hand, but when you notice a problem with it, just try to fix it. They are quick to blemish our records and slow to repair the damage. With the credit bureaus, we really are “guilty until proven innocent” and dealing with them creates more stress than driving in L.A. traffic. After you negotiate the detours, speed bumps and jerks on the road, when traffic is miserable in L.A., you will at least get home even though it might be an hour later than you anticipated. But with the Credit Reporting Agencies, it can very easily take more than two years to clear your record and in some cases, blemishes are never properly repaired.

This inordinate power given to these agencies to ruin the financial reputations of millions of innocent citizens is obscene and something must be done about it and, in fact, attempts are being made. The U.S. Supreme Court took up the issue of identity theft recently agreeing to decide whether victims can sue a credit reporting agency if they learn belatedly an impostor stole their good credit history. Some identity theft victims have sought to hold credit reporting agencies liable for wrongly approving credit for an impostor. They say those agencies must tighten their procedures. But the fate of those lawsuits often turns on a matter of timing.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act says that claims for money damages must be brought “within two years from the date on which liability arises.” If the high court follows that rule strictly, the deadline could expire before the victims have even learned of the problem. Consumers don’t learn they have a problem until they go for new credit and that may be years later. The outcome of trials such as these are up in the air, but in the meantime, all we can do is struggle with these credit bureaus. So if you have a blemish on your credit report or fraud against your account, pack your bags, take a valium and get ready for a long haul.

**I hope you now see the importance of PREVENTION!
That’s what this book is all about.**

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Author of the groundbreaking book, BUSINESS FRAUD; KNOW IT & PREVENT IT, James Blanco is also a professional speaker and works with corporations in training personnel how to "Fraud-Proof" their organizations by putting fraud prevention measures in place. Mr. Blanco is one of only 150 Certified Forensic Document Experts in the United States and Canada. Sifting through forged, counterfeited and altered documents, Mr .Blanco offers professional expert opinions as to when documents lie or tell the truth.

His 17-year plus career in the field includes Forensic Document positions with the U.S. Treasury Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the California Department of Justice, and the Sacramento Financial Crimes Bureau. His clients include corporations, companies in the banking and insurance industries, as well as businesses and law enforcement agencies from around the country.

In addition to being an adjunct instructor on the faculty of St. John's University (Louisiana), Mr. Blanco also mentors interning Master's Students from the University of New Haven's satellite campus in neighbouring Citrus Heights. His businesses, Fraud Prevention Services and Blanco Forensic Documents, are located in Rocklin California.

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“Taking the PUNCH out of White-Collar-Crime”

Jim Blanco
“Fraud Buster”

Jim Blanco’s Presentations and Workshops include:

- Ten Ways to Stop Identity Theft
- Fraud Prevention Saves Millions
- Counterfeit Detection Workshop for Banking and Retail Industries
- Prevent Fraud in the Banking Industry; external and internal fraud
- Insurance Fraud Prevention Tactics
- Healthy Medical Records Vaccinate Against Costly Legal Attacks
- “Fraud-Proof” Real Estate and Escrow Documents
- Fifteen steps to Prepare Iron-Clad Contracts
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- EEO--Threats Sabotage and Sexual Harassment
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