



PROTECTING YOUR REPUTATION:

You've read the headlines. The CEO (Chief Executive Officer) claims it was all the CFO's doing (Chief Financial Officer). This is somewhat akin to Claude Rains' famous line from *Casablanca*: "*I'm shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!*"¹

You may not be the head of a Fortune 500 corporation, but you do have certain authority that is hopefully commensurate with your responsibilities. Sure, you trust the people you work with² – you hired most of them. But could a newcomer (one whose "*ethical values are not fully formed*")³) take advantage of the situation – diverting resources, selling information, or doctoring records?

Maybe you aren't the protector of portable assets, but you could be the keeper of marketable assets – like information. I don't want to put ideas into your head, but there are people who will pay good money for adverse information – be it financial information (late child support payments or tax data), medical problems, employee discipline (demotion, termination), arrest records (even dismissals), confidential family court proceedings (PINS, JD), driving histories (speeding, DWI). And there are other people who will pay good money to change that information.

Are you one of those indispensable managers who does it all? Never takes a vacation – never takes a sick day? Authorizes the payments, writes the checks, reconciles the accounts? There are a zillion case studies about such managers, and their off-shore bank accounts.

Even if you are beyond reproach, could someone else blame you for their own malfeasance?

Do you keep your computer password on a Post-It™ note? Do you share log-in identity with a co-worker or subordinate? How about the key or combination to the safe? Even petty cash can tempt someone with a drug habit or gambling problem.



Would it be possible for someone in your office (or a total stranger, for that matter) to send an e-mail from your computer workstation, then let you take the blame when the Secret Service show up? Could someone log onto an inappropriate website, fill your hard drive with prurient material, then start a whispering campaign about your Internet browsing habit?

Never mind that – could they use your computer to doctor or delete critical records while you were on break? And if those files were doctored or deleted, would anyone ever notice?

There are a lot of things that can keep you lying awake at night (like nuclear or biological terrorists, fuel bills, the economy, that upcoming Civil Service exam or your kids' report cards). Did you lock the back door, let the cat out, turn off the stove, unplug the iron, **log off at work?**

Honesty may be the best policy, but it is not the only way to protect you from false accusation. At the very least, you should treat your passwords like money – keep them in your wallet, not on your CRT screen.

¹ **Rick:** How can you close me up? On what grounds?

Captain Renault: I'm shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!

[*a croupier hands Renault a pile of money*]

Croupier: Your winnings, sir.

Captain Renault: [*sotto voce*] Oh, thank you very much.

² My father used to say "*Trust all men, but cut the cards.*"

³ Thanks to OSC's Dave Hancox for that euphemism.