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“Dog Parks” aka Leash-free Area

Increasingly pet owners are looking for ways to socialize their pets. A popular way is visiting one of the local “dog park” or “leash-free” zones that are becoming familiar in municipalities across North America.

These facilities commonly have a fenced area with double gate access. Double-gating allows patrons to enter, remove their dogs leash before releasing it into the open leash-free area. Upon leaving the park, their dog is contained in the area between the two gates while leashing it to leave.

A survey I conducted last spring of municipalities all across North America found very few reports of risk issues with leash-free area. Typically, complaints were that dog owners would bring dogs that were insufficiently socialized, or trained to act appropriately, in the off-leash area. Two mentions were made aggressiveness between animals - none were reported towards dogs attacking people in a park. The two complainants recommended that whenever possible, a separate area should be constructed for small breeds to reduce their chance of injury from larger animals (whether intentional or from rambunctious playing.)

When designing an off-leash park, typical considerations include:

- Recruit assistance from volunteer dog-owners, if possible,
- Site the facility a reasonable distance from playground, ball diamonds, soccer fields, etc.,
- Larger facilities’ are better; it reduces space conflicts between animals and the amount of wear on the sod caused by heavy use,
- Be prepared for resistance from neighbors who may not be familiar with the off-leash facility concept,
- Provide sufficient trash containers for owners to deposit the results of their ‘poop and scoop’ efforts,
- Post signs informing users of acceptable / non-acceptable behavior,
- Fenced areas increase the perception of safety for people afraid of dogs. Plus fencing protects dogs from vehicles on nearby roads and in the parking lot.

For more tips – email joy@cunnart.com

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“The supreme end of education is expert discernment in all things-- the power to tell the good from the bad, the genuine from the counterfeit, and to prefer the good and the genuine to the bad and the counterfeit.”

✉ *Johnson*

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Internal Theft - who will be next?

Year after year surveys of workplaces find that their greatest losses to employers is caused by those they want most to trust – their employees and volunteers. A 2006 survey of U.S. workplaces found that there are two general categories of theft. Most people think of theft as occurring when employees (or volunteers!) take physical assets or funds for their own use. Theft also occurs when employees use corporate time for their own purposes. Depending on which survey you choose estimates vary from 20 minutes to 2.2 hours daily.

Have you noticed the security staff in large retailers? They are there to watch employees as much as to watch shoppers. Some retailers calculate they lose more merchandise and money to their employees than they do to shoplifters, up to 2% of total annual sales. A quick review of retail and security publications reveals that employees are very creative when it comes to taking assets for their own gain.

Will co-workers report them? Not as readily as you might expect. Usually co-workers point out misbehavior to peers, but not to managers. A recent survey of Express Personnel Services of Oklahoma polled 1,000 adult workers to get their anonymous thoughts on workplace theft. They found that most employees would turn in co-workers if they thought it was a large theft that would be burdensome on their employer. If they know, or are friendly with the culprit though, only 10% of them would report it to a manager.

You can reduce the chances that applicants will steal from your organization. Start by conducting *thorough* reference checks. Verify that applicants' educational degrees/diplomas were actually earned. Ask if they actually performed all of the tasks listed on their resume. Utilize behavioral tests to help assess whether applicants will be productive if hired. Thorough screening takes more time. But it will pay off in the long run!

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