

Selecting a Firm to Reduce Service Theft

Q&A with Chip Carstensen,
President and CEO of Buckeye CableSystem



What made you decide to utilize the services of a vendor to combat service theft rather than internal resources?

Chip: It was a matter of economics and expertise. There are only so many hours in the day, and we simply didn't have the man hours to aggressively fight service theft. In addition, we didn't have the expertise to effectively and efficiently tackle the issue.

What criteria did you use to evaluate potential vendors?

Chip:

1. First and foremost, we wanted an experienced firm with a proven track record. If they weren't experienced in cable theft, we didn't consider them.
2. Next we clearly defined our goals and then assessed the firm's ability to be our partner in achieving them. Our goal was to reduce our service theft in a manner that did not jeopardize our company's reputation for customer service. We weren't interested in a collections firm approach. We wanted the firm to pursue respectful resolutions that did not chase our customers off to the competition.
3. We rigorously evaluated the firms' reputation. What other cable operators had used their services? Did they have positive things to say about their experience? Had the firm ever been sued?

Once you chose a firm, how did you hold the firm accountable?

Chip: After selecting Secure Signals, we verbally established very clear expectations regarding a customer-centric focus, measurable objectives, regular status reports and such. Then, we executed a formal contractual agreement that outlined the terms of our working relationship.

In retrospect, is there anything you would have done differently?

Chip: Yes, I would have outsourced our theft reduction efforts sooner! With Secure Signals' turnkey, no-cost, revenue sharing approach, it was a no-risk, win-win approach for Buckeye CableSystem. Our company has reaped the rewards. Last year (2007) Secure Signals converted 15,000 of our pirates into paying customers which yielded 3.75% subscriber growth and \$3.1 million in revenue for Buckeye CableSystem.