

# BoozNooz

## How to Burn Down the House Theft in the Restaurant Industry

*“The Scam Bible is literally the other team’s playbook.”*

AN INTERVIEW WITH R. CHIP DEGLINKTA BY IAN FOSTER, REGIONAL VP

**T**wo Bourbon Street waiters have just published *How to Burn Down the House: the Infamous Waiter & Bartender’s Scam Bible*. In this explosive book, R. Chip DeGlinkta and Peter Francis share detailed instructions on how to cheat a restaurant by scamming cash and merchandise without getting caught.

The book has caused quite a stir in the restaurant industry. DeGlinkta and Francis have been vilified for promoting theft and dishonesty. But, the way they tell it, this criticism is blaming the messengers – and missing the point. “*The Scam Bible*,” says DeGlinkta, “is simply the most truthful portrait of the scamming bartender or waiter.”

Whether offensive or not, their book is a must-read for restaurant and bar operators. As they point out, this is the “other team’s playbook.”

Thus, the book is full of proven ways to rip off a restaurant or bar. The authors maintain that they have seen each of the “scams” in action at various times in their careers as waiters or bartenders. Here is one example from page 61: “when the House is dumb enough to advertise free coupons... consider it [money]...straight into your bank account. It’s all free money for you so long as you can get your enterprising fives onto a limitless supply of the same coupons and match them up with items from previous transactions.”

This advice is followed by step-by-step instructions on exactly how to work this scam. For a final touch, the authors tell you how to “play it off” if you are caught. In other words, they coach the reader how to talk your way out of each of the scams. Ian Foster interviewed one of the authors, Chip DeGlinkta, for *BoozNooz*.

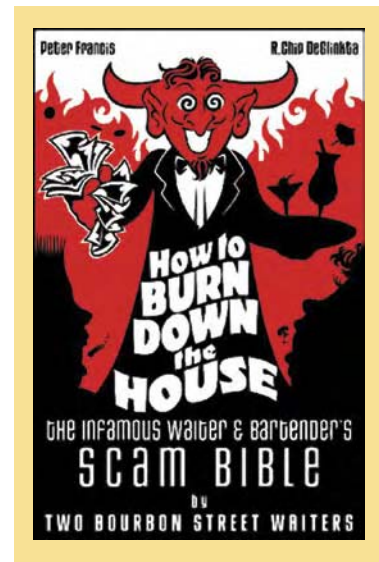
**BoozNooz:** You paint a pretty bleak picture of a theft problem in the restaurant industry. Is it really as bad as it sounds?

**Chip DeGlinkta:** It’s probably much worse.

Most waiters, and especially bartenders, are scamming at least \$40 a night – even \$150 on a good night if they have a good angle.

I have personally seen people really shake-down places for \$40 Gs a year. I figure if you have four or five guys working together (especially with a dirty manager), you have a situation where you can kiss your business

**“What other industry lets someone steal \$30k a year with no consequences?”**



goodbye...I have seen this in seasonal places especially. I know people who work at places for the “fleece-ability” of the place.

Since we wrote this book, it has been interesting how many different types of people have shared with us their experience of ripping off restaurants. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, even a forensic scientist approached the table one day and let out a hearty guffaw at the book’s title and couldn’t wait to tell me all the angles he had devised and perpetrated in his day.

**BN:** What percentage of bartenders or servers do you think are trying to find an angle to steal?

**CD:** 90%...easy – especially the bartenders because it is so ridiculously easy.

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**“A bartender is a mack-daddy...he can scam to his heart’s content.”**

However, I think most of them grow into it rather than actively look for it. Usually the angles present themselves and they develop a growing taste for it. Then it is only a matter of time until the easy money undermines their work ethic. It takes the pressure off when you no longer work for tips. All of a sudden the tables are turned and you don’t care if the jerk at table 13 tips you or not, because you are whacking him for \$15 or \$20 anyway.

I can tell you, I haven’t met many bartenders that aren’t buried up to their elbows in the till. Many are just taking a little. But it all starts with \$10 here or there. One thing leads to another and after a while you get used to making \$50k a year by supplementing your income with scamming. It’s hard to walk away from at that point.

And one thing’s for sure, you can never tell who is doing it. I worked with a sterling guy a few years ago. He was proud to be in the service industry and everyone admired him – he was pretty much an icon for a clean-cut trustworthy fellow. I found out later that he was splitting checks with staff. He would run a shift behind the bar and whack the owner big time; people are so corruptible, even good people. That doesn’t make them bad people and the duality is confusing to them.

**BN:** Why do you think theft is such a big problem in the restaurant industry in particular?

**CD:** It is not prosecuted. Petty restaurant theft is completely decriminalized in our society. What other industry lets someone steal \$30,000 a year with no consequences besides a slap on the wrist or a pink slip in the unlikely event that the theft is detect-

ed? You’d get in more trouble stealing a pair of panties from JC Penney.

When you read the book, you’ll probably notice that not only are the scams described, but also how to wriggle out of them if you get caught. These are often more ingenious than the scams themselves. Servers and bartenders know that if they have even a half-assed explanation, they will not get into any real trouble.

**BN:** Do employees think of it as theft?

**CD:** There is definitely a criminal element who makes no bones about it being theft and is motivated by seeing what he can get away with.

But most employees just tend to want to even the score. Their manager is a dick or they feel that they aren’t being paid enough.

For most they make rationalizations like that all the time. Often it is bad management that provides an endless supply of rationalizations. They might have a coked-up or just a grab-assy manager who is trying to diddle the waitresses. He is short-tempered, plays favorites, over-worked, and doesn’t give a shit about his job or staff. We used to refer to it as the “Penal Code”. Your manager acts like a jerk? No problem. That will cost him \$100 bucks! Every time! The same code goes for customers.

As long as there has been a wedge between the aristocracy and worker,

the worker has always found a way to get his slice of the pie.

**BN:** It seems to me that one bad apple can be quite influential. When new or inexperienced employees see their colleagues getting away with murder, they feel emboldened to join

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**in. I think that some bars end up with a culture of theft.**

**How much does peer example play into it?**

**CD:** Big time...when you see someone walk out with twice the money for half the work, it wears on you.

After awhile, you join in the fun.

**BN:** In your book you sound envious of the ease with which bartenders can steal?

**CD:** A bartender is a mack-daddy. He doesn't need to have any subtlety; there is no need for him to try to be creative. He can scam as much as he likes without any real obstacles. Most managers are afraid NOT to trust their bartenders.

For example, the bartender doesn't have to worry too much about credit cards – a large number of his checks are settled with cash. That means there is no need for him to use some of the more creative scams, like “putting the customer on ice” or “the car-rion check” to try to maneuver a check into a cash transaction.

The bartender can scam to his heart's content.

**BN:** At Bevinco we often encounter managers who don't think they have a problem in their bar; they are almost in denial.

**CD:** That attitude is the root cause of the whole problem.

Generally, it is just a defensive reflex, because it takes a lot of often unpleasant work and confrontation to get your restaurant or bar in shape.

Since we wrote the book, I have had a lot of managers come up to me and say, “I have been managing for years

**“These are all basically accounting scams. I am sure that the Enron guys got their start pumping drinks.”**

and have seen it all. I know this isn't happening in my restaurant. When I read your book, I already knew about all these scams.”

I guarantee that these managers don't know it all. In fact, they are the guys who the scammers love to screw the most.

**BN:** Why can't a really strong manager eliminate theft by diligently watching for this stuff?

**CD:** First, most managers are so stressed and over-worked that they don't take any preventative steps and don't spend a lot of time thinking about the whole issue. There may be an initial push after a meeting or after an owner chews them a new a-hole over food or liquor costs, but that quickly relaxes into the rigors and realities of everyday life.

A lot of the scams are able to continue because the manager wants to be friends with his staff – he doesn't want to be perceived as some kind of jerk. Pretty girls, in particular, get away with murder. The manager often doesn't want to know if they are scamming, or at least he turns a blind-eye to the whole possibility. He

doesn't want to rock the boat and certainly doesn't want to stop the flirting. Typically, like most people, he or she is afraid of confrontation.

In addition, these scams are so quick to happen that it is not necessarily always incompetent management... although there is plenty of that.

**BN:** You are pretty hard on management in general in the book – referring to them in disparaging terms such as “Floordick”...

**CD:** Yeah, some managers are really offended by the book, but what would you call an incompetent manager who loses you thousands and thousands of dollars because he doesn't do his job?

**BN:** Imagine that you owned a bar or restaurant, what concrete steps would you take to eliminate this stuff?

**CD:** If it was my personal money, there would be no more mercy... I would can a thief in a heartbeat. I certainly wouldn't be afraid that some bartender or waiter is going to think I am kind of an asshole.

I would be very random – grab their check, jump behind the bar, pull a cash drawer – that kind of thing. I would absolutely have a computer POS system and look for unusual check activity such as splitting checks, combining checks, looking for checks that have been open for a long time, basically anything unusual.

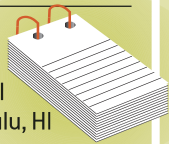
If a diligent manager digs into the paper trail, he will find evidence to catch even the most committed scammer.

But, of course, management also has

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## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING events

**July 12-14:** Hawaii Lodging, Hospitality & Food Service Expo, Neal Blaisdell Center, Honolulu, HI



**August 20-22:** Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo, L. A. Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA

**September 9-11:** Florida Restaurant Association Convention, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL

**Sept. 21:** Sysco Food Show, Reno/ Sparks Center, Reno, NV

**October 4-5:** Tavern League of Wisconsin 70th Annual Fall Convention & Trade Show, Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, WI

## INSIDE:

# How to Burn Down the House

**“This is the book they hoped no one would ever write.”**

— *Bill Marvin, The Restaurant Doctor*

Bevinco’s Ian Foster interviews R. Chip DeGlintka, co-author of a controversial new book exposing the corruption and scams perpetrated on bar and restaurant owners by their employees.

**A must-read article!**

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to have the balls to take action when the evidence is discovered, and you would be amazed at how much a person will sacrifice to avoid confrontation.

**BN:** Your book has been pretty controversial. I understand that some bookstores won’t stock it.

**CD:** A few bookstores and numerous people have decided that it takes a lenient if not celebratory view of petty crime and it offends their morals. Of course, they don’t have a problem with books or movies that glorify and celebrate “high crime”, like *Silence of the Lambs*, *American Psycho*, or *Ocean’s Eleven*. It is interesting that people clap uncontrollably when Hannibal Lector sautés someone’s brains, but some waiter hoses down a cheapskate guest or his jerk manager for 15 or 20 bucks and he’s Satan incarnate. We find that the book is ironic on many levels.

But I think the criticism is a little

misguided. The waiter who is already scamming already knows what works for him – he doesn’t need our book.

The truth is, people learn more effectively when they’re excited. Let’s face it, there have been a lot of books written on this topic but I can’t tell you their names or who wrote them. People are angry at us, but this book is absolutely true. The light-hearted attitude towards stealing is reflected in all levels of our society and is particularly cavalier in the food and beverage industry, as personified by the doctors and forensic scientist I mentioned earlier. *The Scam Bible* is literally the other team’s play-book, and includes not only the plays, but the attitudes and opinions as well. If you don’t take yourself too seriously, you will probably find it both hilarious and extremely useful. **BN**

**BEVINCO has a limited supply of *How to Burn Down the House: The Scam Bible* available at a discounted price. Call us at 1-888-238-4626 to get one.**

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