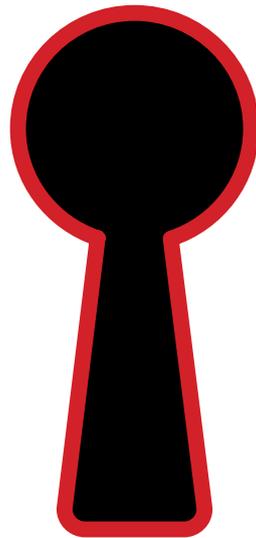


7 SECRETS

THE **FIRST AID INDUSTRY**
DOESN'T WANT
YOU TO KNOW



**AVOIDING THE TRAPS OF OVER SUPPLY
AND OTHER “DODGY PRACTICES”**

Summary

The purpose of this report is to alert business owners, purchasing officers or people assigned to manage first aid in their workplace, that many different tactics are employed by first aid representatives when replenishing your first aid kit. These practices could be costing your company unnecessary expense and waste.

This is not to say that any business owner should shirk their responsibility in ensuring a safe workplace. In fact the underlying message of this report is to ensure companies meet their OHS obligations in the most efficient and cost effective way, especially if shareholder interests are a consideration. As someone once said, “a dollar saved is a dollar earned”. In fact a dollar saved is much more than a dollar earned when you consider that paying for services comes out of profits.

The second purpose of this report is to make business owners aware of their obligations under the OHS Act as far as providing first aid in the workplace is concerned. Each state and territory has its own version of the Act; nevertheless the fundamentals are the same. For your convenience links to various State Acts can be found at [First Aid Kits and Supplies](#) for further investigation.

As you may know, Safework Australia is in the final stages of introducing legislation for a national code for all safety matters. This report does not deal with OHS matters but rather focuses on the practices of first aid representatives who replenish kits.

Other useful links can be found at [First Aid Kits and Supplies](#) where you can download guides produced by various authorities in determining your first aid requirements.

Introduction

In this report we'll reveal how some companies are being “ripped off” by their suppliers.

The report is segmented into 3 sections:

- Introduction and history
- Tactics
- OHS requirements

The secret section is split into 2 - the first and most prevalent practice and the second part is a brief explanation of each of the various “tricks” employed by some less than ethical reps.

Quite often the tactics are employed by opportunists who arrive uninvited and pass themselves off as your current supplier. This in itself is an illegal practice. The information contained in this report is a compilation of data, experience, complaints and surveys conducted over more than 12 years

Disclaimer

This report should not be taken as anything more than an awareness of the first aid industry and should not be viewed as a substitute for professional advice.

A brief history

The first aid industry dates back many decades with incumbents like St Johns & Red Cross providing a noble service to the community at large - and still do. These community services were supported by selling first aid training, kits and supplies.

Over time the industry became deregulated opening the door of opportunity for entrepreneurial types to enter the market. Since competition is good for the consumer, they benefited from more suppliers in the market, effectively driving down prices.

As the industry developed it attracted a more commercial characteristic with the “deregulation” of first aid. Authorities, like WorkCover NSW and their respective counterparts in other states introduced legal requirements for kits and supplies in the workplace. A very prescriptive list of minimum requirements was created to ensure major trauma could be dealt with in an emergency. Unfortunately, these items were rarely used and can still be found in kits 10 years after first purchase. None of these items had a “use by” date and could possibly pose a threat by introducing bacteria into a wound. It was much later that “use by” dates were introduced universally (almost!) to reduce the risk associated with old dressings, ointments and other supplies.

The introduction of use by dates was a “god send” for suppliers as there now existed a legitimate reason for re-stocking kits with out of date supplies. Unfortunately many of these regulation items were seldom used and remained unopened in the first aid kit. More disturbing for the suppliers was that these items were low cost/high profit items. The use of these items was minimal, the invoice value was small and the profits were simply not great enough to support a kit audit and replenishment service if all that was going to be replaced was the regulation items.

What to do?

With necessity being the mother of invention numerous ideas and methods were devised to create an industry which has become the norm today. In fact most (larger) organisations have their kits checked and replenished by a service company of which there are many each with their own methods of carrying out the service.

Psychological manipulation

In a tried and proven method of channeling an outcome, representatives would use scare tactics to create scenarios involving employees where the injuries sustained were of such significant dimension, that to not be equipped with every conceivable dressing, cream or eye wash would constitute neglect.

And what company would invite the bad publicity associated with neglect of their staff?

Further, and more importantly, it could invite the attention of WorkCover who’s inspector could issue fines, close your business or even start court proceedings or so the claim went. The argument then is: **“What a small price to pay to ensure every contingency was covered by investing in a range of first aid items, just in case!”**

More or less an insurance policy

Quite often these tactics were, and still are, used behind a uniform or some form of authority. When the replenishment was left to a junior or someone easily manipulated, the cost of first aid supplies became somewhat more considerable.

In the following sections we’ll reveal the most common scam used by service companies and the reason they do it.

Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #1

In the introduction we discussed psychological manipulation as the underpinning approach by many first aid kit replenishment representatives. In these and the following chapters we'll expose some of the scams used by some suppliers to keep you buying.

Over-stocking

Overstocking is common in many workplaces. In some cases overstocking is known by the purchaser and it's largely tolerated because they may feel some empathy with the rep who has to "make a living." A noble gesture. Quite often, however, the tolerance is shown by the person ordering but **who doesn't pay the bills!**

Because many sales reps or distributors are self-employed or under pressure to perform, they employ tactics that cost you money and often result in waste. Since most invoices for kit replenishment are under \$200, you, the customer are not overly concerned about paying the invoice. In fact, most companies don't really know what contents are being replaced or added to their kits. They rely on the honesty and integrity of the supplier/rep to keep them stocked with what's needed. The consolation is that they feel confident they would be compliant if an audit was undertaken by a WorkCover inspector.

Over stocking can consist of simply including much more of the same item than you're ever likely to use.

Example:

If you were to check your kit, you may find several packets of 50 "band aids", or plastic strips. Just how many small cuts/reported cuts actually happen in your workplace?

A quick review of your accident/ injury forms will give an indication of just how much you actually need.

Case study

A large Sydney based company conducted an audit with the help of a First Aid Kits and Supplies specialist on their first aid room and the numerous kits located on a number of floors. The audit consisted of reviewing actual injuries/needs and the total amount of first aid supplies on hand and the costs involved. The result was that **several large container, "wheelie bin size" were filled with over stocked items.** The audit revealed:

- Many items were out of date
- The majority of those items were never used with safety seals still intact
- Sterile items had been opened and left in the kit for future use
- The number of kits on site was double what was required

When the total inventory was finalised it was found that the over stocked items alone would have provided supplies **for a year without replenishment** or need for service. The entire procedure was overhauled, simplified and managed in-house, generating substantial savings*.

In addition to being overstocked it became clear that staff had to be educated on appropriate use, especially of sterile items, and be conscious of the needs of their department/s.

Your Tactic #1 – Conduct your own audit with First Aid Kits and Supplies

Conclusion

Placing your confidence in a commission based rep may not provide the assurance that you are meeting regulatory requirements or that the items are suitable for your environment. The OHS Acts in all States requires every company to conduct a risk audit and be prepared for any incident that may occur in their workplace.

NSW legislation states that management of a workplace kit must be done by a qualified first aider.

This means that companies cannot abdicate this responsibility to a third party, especially if that person is not properly qualified.

Mismanagement of kit replenishment can result in:

- Substantial waste, all of which contributes unnecessarily to 'environmental pollution'.
- Just as importantly waste and overstocking results in overspending on uncalled for items
- Waste of time in an auditing process

For information on the regulations in your State please see [First Aid Kits and Supplies](#).

Regulation

The fact is, require first aid trained personnel to manage the kits in the workplace. A simple course "**Managing first aid in the workplace**" - a short course can be undertaken on-line which teaches appointed staff how to manage first aid kits and replenishment. This knowledge, coupled with the skills gained in a first aid course equips them to do this job better than a rep whose interest lies in selling just as much as he/she can, regardless of your actual workplace needs.

Experience tells us that many, if not most reps are not qualified even as a first aider, let alone completed a course in "Manage first aid in the workplace", a course accredited by VETAB, now ASQA and endorsed by WorkCover.

The questions that have to be asked are:

- Am I prepared to place my confidence in a rep who has little knowledge of my workplace?
- Am I prepared to continue to "wink" at the practice of overstocking?
- Am I prepared to have the wrong items, out of date items or unhygienic first aid supplies in my workplace?

While companies focus on the safety of the workplace, willingly purchasing personal protective gear and ensuring safe practices and rightly so, the first aid component is overlooked or simply ignored.

Do you or your company fall into this category?

Quick Quiz

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Does my company have a first aid policy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Does my company have a first aid plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Has my company tested the first aid plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Does my company have an effective method of communicating first aid plans and procedures? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, it might be time to send your staff to a suitable course to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and systems to handle an emergency.

Suitable courses can be found at First Aid Kits and Supplies.com.au

This could save you and your company serious ‘heartache’ and substantial fines in the event of serious injury. Large fines can be handed out by WorkCover inspectors in addition to the trauma of legal action, court cases etc.

Conclusion

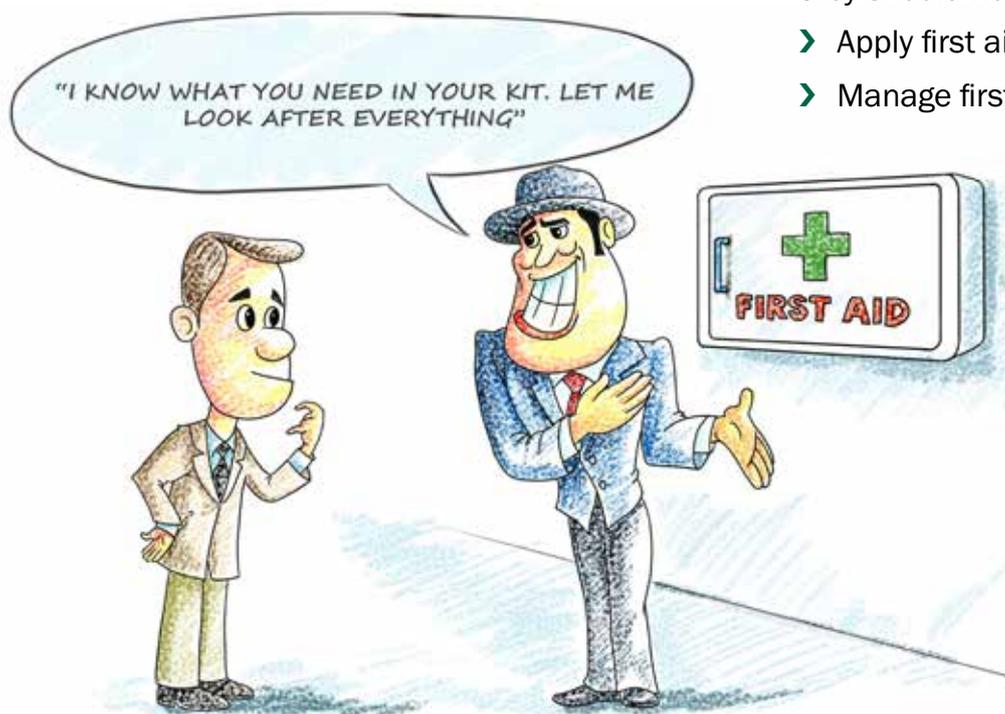
The practice of overstocking is widespread and not confined to any one supplier. While the \$ value may seem insignificant, unnecessary expense comes straight off the bottom line and leads to waste. To guard against this practice make sure you have properly qualified staff taking care of first aid in your workplace.

Taking these measures can protect you from bad practice and ensure you’re meeting your OHS obligations toward staff, visitors and contractors.

Tips

4 steps to protect your self from being overstocked and remain compliant:

1. Check that “out of date” items are in fact out of date
2. Question the need for items that are not regulation items - if they have not been identified as necessary to manage your workplace risk
3. Check and remove unnecessary items on the order before signing off
4. Ensure your rep is qualified - as a minimum they should hold qualifications in:
 - Apply first aid
 - Manage first aid in the workplace



Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #2

We revealed how overstocking leads to waste and unnecessary expense and some tips on how to avoid the oversupply 'dodgy practice'.

You then had the option of completing a quick quiz to see if your company is compliant with State and Territory regulations.

In this section you'll learn another tactic used by reps to sell you product you don't need and is based on assuming ignorance...

“You don't know what you have if you don't know what you had!”

Well, do you know what's in your kit?

Your rep /supplier does. One of the tactics he'll use is to remove items and place them in a bin or box. If they go in a bin, are you likely to check that what has been thrown out is actually out of date or unusable?

If the items are out of date or unusable then tossing them in the bin is a legitimate practice. On the other hand the items may be close to being out of date and remain suitable for using at home, at sporting events and the like without simply throwing them out.

However, what reps sometimes do is place these items in a box which is removed from the premises without you even seeing what is being removed. A quick, cursory display of the contents is offered assuming you will be satisfied that the items are genuinely unusable.

The fact is that on some occasions these items are not out of date or unusable. The rep will then replenish your kit with these items which you may not have needed in the first place.

Tips

1. Be sure to check items being disposed of.
2. Make sure these items are really needed and that the use by date has come and gone without the item ever being opened.
3. If it has never been opened and is out of date, usually 2-3 years, there's a good chance you won't need these again.
4. Make sure the risks and potential injuries which may arise have suitable items in your kit.
5. Take home items that are still in date and use them at sports or other events.

Items nearing their out of date period

When items are nearing their out of date period, say 3, 4 or 5 months away reps will convince you to replace the stock while he's there since he's unlikely to be back for several months.

Why not design your own model that reduces this waste, check that it is an item that is actually needed and create your own list of first aid needs based on your organisation's risk profile.

There's a tool that can be found at firstaidkitsandsupplies.com.au/first-aid-supplies-order-form that shows all the items required by your State or Territory regulations. This checklist is updated as and when regulations change so you be sure you're up to date with first aid kit requirements.

Use this tool as a 'self auditing' instrument to ensure compliance and manage your kit content, eliminate waste and avoid 'dodgy practice'.

This should be endorsed by your trained first aider who has also completed the on-line “**manage first aid in the workplace**” course.

Scams

1. Over-stocking

Because many sales reps or distributors are self employed or under pressure to perform, they employ tactics that cost you money. Since most invoices are under \$200, you, the customer are not overly concerned about paying the invoice. In fact, most companies don't really know what they're having placed into their kits. They rely on the honesty and integrity of the supplier/rep to keep them stocked with what's needed.

Over stocking can consist of simply including much more of the same item than you're ever likely to use. For example if you were to check your kit, you may find several packets of 50 "band aids", or plastic strips.

Just how many small cuts/paper cuts actually happen in your workplace?

A quick review of your accident/injury forms will give an indication of just how much you actually need.

One technique used for over-stocking is to take items out of the box.

Another reason companies allow reps to manage their first aid kits is because they rely on the rep to ensure they meet their OHS regulatory requirement.

2. Not qualified

The fact is, the law requires first aid trained personnel to manage their kits. Experience tells us that many, if not most, reps are not qualified even as a first aider, let alone completed a course in "managing first aid in the workplace", a course accredited by VETAB and endorsed by WorkCover.

3. Removing items not used and selling them to the next client or worse still, selling them back to you!

4. Over priced items

5. Frequency – ever thought about who uses all these first aid items?

6. Encourages pilfering (shrinkage)

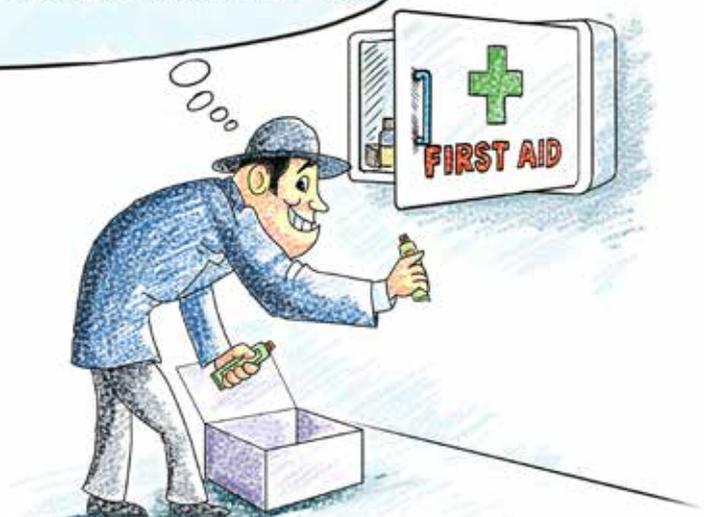
7. Conned by one supplier claiming to be authorized and a few weeks later another drifts in

8. Opening unused items, removing some content to show it had been used and needs replacing

9. Remove items ,place in bin without showing you the content and then say he's had to replace all these items

10. Decanting large boxes of band aids and selling them in smaller containers

"IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT I'VE TAKEN OUT, THEY WON'T KNOW THAT THEY HAVEN'T USED IT IN 5 YEARS."



Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #3

Sell it twice!

This is a carryover tactic from secret #1 & 2 and is possibly the most reprehensible of all the dodgy practices.

For example if you were to check your kit, you may find several packets of 50 “band aids”, or plastic strips.

Just how many small cuts/paper cuts actually happen in your workplace?

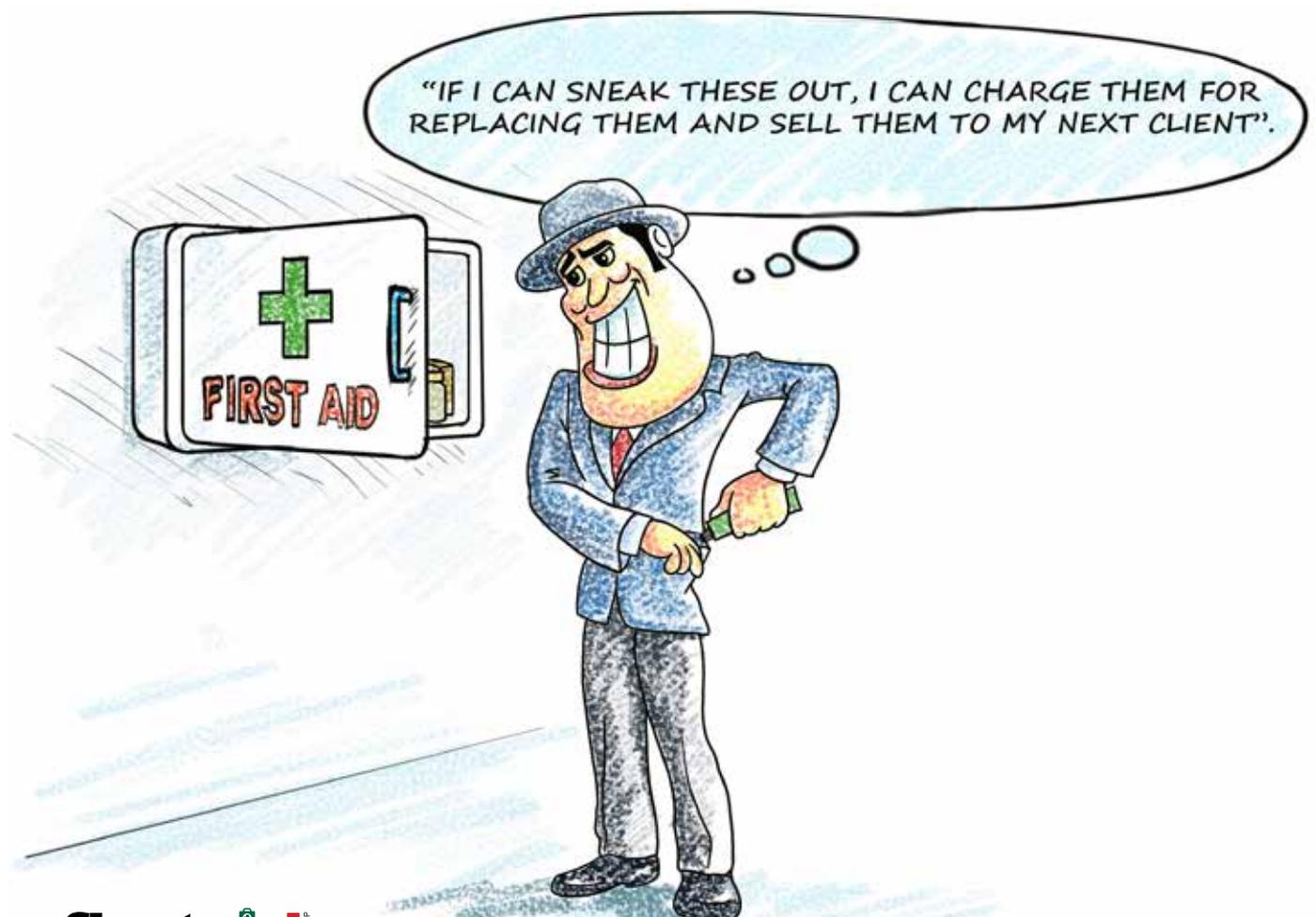
A quick review of your accident/injury forms will give an indication of just how much you actually need.

This is an opportunity too good to pass up. The rep will remove excess items, including items which may have a use by date but never used and covertly place them in his box of replenishment items. They now in effect become his stock.

He then moves onto the next client and sells these items, as new, to that client. The client is obviously unaware that these items have simply been transferred from one client to the next, himself and he pays for items which the rep has not had to purchase. Profit? 100%!

An even more insidious practice is the rep will sell your own items back to you!

After all, if you don't know the contents of your kit how could you possibly know whether the items are new or from your own supply which you paid for at the previous visit?



Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #4

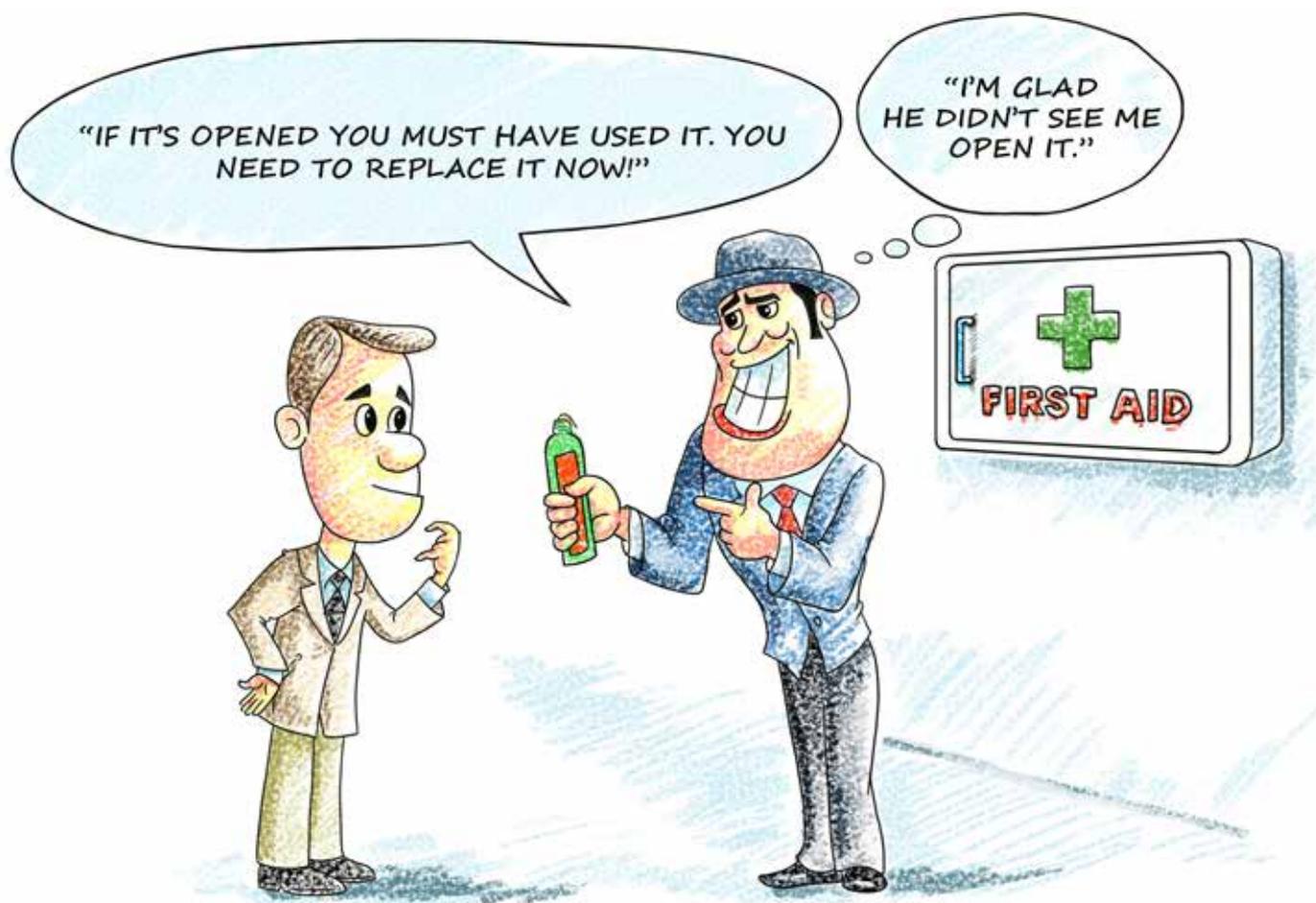
If it's been opened it must have been used

This is a tactic which involves identifying items which you were convinced to buy and which have never been used. For example the rep will open a tube of ointment or creams and squeeze a half the content out and then replace it with a new one, usually a larger pack since it has obviously been used.

Ointments and creams are usually the more expensive items in your kit, so replacing them will help get the invoice value up to an acceptable level and make the service worthwhile. Reps will attempt to keep invoice values above \$100, which means they have to sell items of greater value. Basic items are generally very cheap, not frequently used and form the core items of any first aid kit.

Tip

1. After assessing your workplace risk, keep only items that are required
2. Make sure all injuries are reported, any treatment given is recorded along with items used from the kit
3. This will help you build a profile on your organisations needs and identify the items you really need
4. Check the order the rep is requesting you to sign against the accident/injury report record to ensure the items being proposed are in fact being used



Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #5

Identity fraud!

Many reps are opportunistic. While this tactic is not as often employed as it once was it does still happen. A rep will turn up and announce that he is here to service your kit. You may respond that you already have a supplier to which he will reply that he has taken over from that rep. That's how he knows that the kit needs replenishment.

Once on site he will replace or cover over the stickers that your current supplier has placed on your kits. Naturally, when the time comes to call your rep to do a service on the kit, the name and contact details, (that have now been replaced), is the one who will be called.

In one easy sweep, you have been duped and a substitute rep has taken over. And a rep that is willing to do this is obviously willing to use any one or more of the dodgy practices revealed in this report to rip you off.

Tip

1. Best practice and the one that is required under legislation, is to appoint a trained staff member to maintain your kits
2. Communicate the appointment to all staff, so that if a fraud calls all staff will be aware that the company has an appointed member to maintain first aid and can turn away any and all reps regardless of their intention
3. Remove any stickers on the kits and replace them with your own instructions on what to do to have the kit serviced
4. Include this policy in your induction so new staff are aware of your first aid plane, kit locations and procedures for handling an emergency or any general first aid treatments



Secrets of the first aid industry revealed

SECRET #6

The price is (not) right! Decanting

As you may or may not be aware motor vehicle service centres buy oil in bulk, decant it into one litre or two litre bottles and sell it at retail prices. We accept this as 'normal'.

The same practice occurs when servicing your kit with a small twist associated with it!

The rep will remove items from a larger pack, place them into a smaller pack and sell the smaller pack to you, thereby increasing his margin substantially, as much as 100%. For example, you may have a pack of 25 "band aids in your kit with only 10 left in the pack. The opportunistic rep will replace the balance (15) "band aids from his bulk supply and then charge you for a full replacement pack.

Not only has he sold you back the 10 "band aids But the 15 replacement strips have been charged at full retail from a supply which was bought in larger packs at much better prices.

A variation on this method is to 'decant' from your unused box of "band aids, removing a quantity of them, adding to his bulk supply and then selling you another box, since they have been used. (See "secret #3 for more on this practice)

Another technique is to remove an item that is nearly out of date and place it into a pack or bag that has no identifying marks on it. It may be an item that is not "spoilt" by being out of date; nevertheless it's just another example of dodgy practices.

You would have noticed that many of these tactics are 'nickel and dime" practices that won't break the company. However, it's a technique that adds a significant margin to the reps bottom line when any/all of these dodgy practices are employed. Collectively they amount to dishonesty and thievery.

Tip

Once again, best practice is to appoint a trained staff member to manage your kit/s.

Regular, scheduled checks of your kits will ensure you have what's needed in the quantities required

If you do choose to use a rep to service your kit, check the replacement items that they are in sealed, new packaging.

Conclusion

If you've skipped right to the end to get the take home message here it is:

To get the best out of your first aid supplier you need to take control of your First Aid Systems

That means:

- Get the skills you need by completing an appropriate first aid training course.
- Use your risk assessments to assess what you need
- Tell your first aid supplier what you need, don't let them tell you what to put in the kit.
- Always inspect any removed stock before the rep takes it away

If you take the steps outlined in this report, you will go a long way to ensuring that you have the best possible system in place and your workers are as safe as possible.

Frequently asked questions:

- So, just what can I keep in my kit?
- Are there different requirements in each state?
- Are contents governed by regulation?
- Can I keep "Panadol"/paracetamol in my kit?
- How do I know what is out of date?
- Do all items go out of date – like bandages?
- Are there risk assessment templates to help me establish my workplace needs?

Solutions to your problem:

- Become familiar with the regulations in your state
- If necessary, send a representative to an OFA course
- Be sure that all safety committee members have attended an OHS course and remain current
- Conduct a risk assessment which includes the provision for first aid trained personnel
- Ensure that at least one attends a course in "Managing first aid in the workplace" to take care of your kits and/or first aid room (This requires attendance to an OFA course)
- Decide on kit replenishment model that suits your organisation
- Organise a mock test of your plan - use a reputable organisation to help test your plan and offer guidance
- Check that your kit has in fact been serviced. Sometimes reps SAY they have checked, but because it was low value invoice may not be compliant.
- Obtain advice on how items should be used.
- Make it mandatory for the rep to obtain a company order before supplying.

8 reasons to choose First Aid Kits and Supplies as your preferred supplier

1. Take control! Manage your own kits
2. Free managing first aid in the workplace course – conditional on signing a service agreement
3. Trade –in old kit (old, ugly, numerous supplier stickers)
4. Auto replenishment with essentials OR customized order form
5. One supplier for first aid training, kits, supplies and replenishment service
6. Stay legal! (Meet state based regulations)
7. Guarantee to save you money OR we'll refund 100% of the difference
8. Online ordering option (save even more money!)

All too often, the “H” in OHS and is overlooked.



Visit

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