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Dealership embezzler just wanted to be loved

Here's a good example of why car dealers should do criminal background checks on prospective employees, especially those who are likely to handle the business's money. Barbara Driy, a dealership financial manager, spent most of 1986 in jail after being convicted of stealing \$300,000 from her car dealer employer.

Fast forward to 2005. Barbara Driy is again arrested on charges of stealing from her employer, a Porsche-Audi-Acura-Subaru dealer.

Ms. Driy, whose \$1 million-plus embezzlement led to the collapse of the Michigan car dealership, is headed for seven and one-half years of hard time in a federal penitentiary. She was apparently looking for love in all the wrong places.

"I had a need to feel loved and have approval" from others, Ms. Driy said as she tried to explain why she stole from the dealership while working as its office manager.

According to documents filed in the case, she used the money for gifts and vacations for herself, her family and co-workers. In 2002, Ms. Driy spent \$105,000 to bring actor Christopher Reeve and Hall of Fame baseball player Johnny Bench to Grand Rapids for charitable fundraising events.

To cover her tracks, Ms. Driy inflated the value of the store's inventory -- a scheme that helped the business borrow more money from a local bank.

The fraud's overall cost was pegged at \$7.4 million. As a direct result of the fraud the dealership was sold in 2002. Most of the store's employees were laid off.