

Frequently Asked Questions with John Sileo

Q. John, how did you start speaking on identity theft?

A. Several years ago, my business partner used my identity to embezzle \$300,000 from our clients. One of the clients eventually caught on, thought I'd done it and spent the next two years trying to put me in jail. The liabilities destroyed my business. The two-year criminal case sucked the life out of me and the financial troubles just about destroyed my marriage.

At some point I decided that I had a responsibility to keep this from happening to other people, other companies. So I wrote a book, *Stolen Lives: Identity Theft Prevention Made Simple*. It won some awards at about the same time that identity theft topped the list of Americans' Greatest Concerns. Businesses began hiring me to speak to their employees, and I've never looked back.

Q. Who are your best audiences?

A. Let me answer that at two levels. Every person with a Social Security number is at risk of identity theft, which means that nearly everyone can benefit from my presentation. One in ten households will experience identity theft this year with an average cost of recovery of \$7,500 and several hundred hours. The risk can be drastically reduced by implementing a combination of common sense and targeted tools.

But at another level (which entails business profitability and responsibility), **organizations hire me because they need their employees or members to understand the value of the private data that they handle every day**. Whether it's a client's credit card number, a patient's medical file, employee records or sensitive intellectual capital, our economy is built on information. If employees and executives ignore the inherent value of that information (and the resulting liabilities of collecting, storing and handling it), then we can never expect them to protect it. I get them to understand the value of those assets.

When I inspire the audience to think twice about company privacy, your return on investment (by preventing a costly data breach) can be remarkable. **Companies that proactively train their employees about data privacy significantly lower the chances of a costly data breach**. I like to say that safe data is profitable data. Companies like TJX (who had a data breach of 45 million identities) learned the hard way about the profitability of privacy. My audiences understand that before it happens.

Q. How does your audience feel when they walk out the door?

Motivated to protect their privacy and **empowered** with the tools to make it happen. I show them a living, breathing example of what can happen to the person on the other end of that "data" if it disappears. I don't sell fear, but give a voice to reality. And I don't come at it from the perspective of law enforcement or techno-babble, but from having lived it. The audience leaves with the motivation not only to protect themselves and their families, but the sensitive data they handle every day in the workplace. In fact, the understand that their jobs depend on it.

Q. Can you give me a sample of some of the speeches you've given recently?

A. Sure. I've recently spoken for the FDIC, Pfizer, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Liberty Mutual, the Federal Reserve, Prudential Real Estate, Fifth Third Bank, AARP, Principal Financial Group, Drury Inn Hotels and many small and mid-size organizations.

Q. One last question... what happened to your partner?

A. Ah, yes. For that, you will have to come to a speech.

