

## Business crime

A recent documentary programme on BBC television reconstructed last year's famous case of a secretary who stole millions of pounds from her bosses. Exactly just what constitutes a 'crime' is not always easy to define.

1 Describe what typically happens in the crimes below. Do you know any specific examples?

fraud	forgery	insider trading	bribery
theft	fiddling expenses	tax evasion	embezzlement

2 Scan the following article and underline any crimes you can find.

### High crimes

A recent documentary on BBC television vividly dramatised the celebrated case of the secretary who stole millions. De-Laurey stole £4.5m from her bosses at Goldman Sachs and spent it all on a luxury lifestyle of diamonds, designer labels and fast cars. She took the money from her bosses' private bank accounts by forging their signatures and writing cheques to herself. She spent £350,000 on Cartier jewellery alone! De-Laurey was sentenced to seven years in prison. Incredibly, her bosses failed to spot the disappearance of huge amounts of money.

This case turns a spotlight on the amount of crime which probably goes on daily, reported or unreported, in the business world. New technology is now making workplace theft easier. One UK employee manipulated the payment system to create a fake invoice and obtained a cheque for

over £20,000. Another changed spreadsheets over three years to steal a similar amount. Many people 'borrow' office stationery and make personal calls at work – but these are not usually seen as crimes.

So, where do we draw the line? Are the EU bureaucrats who run up huge expense accounts guiltless? A number of high profile crimes and scandals have recently hit the news. The head of CAO, China's main supplier of jet fuel, has been charged with insider trading, as well as failing to disclose losses and forgery. One of the charges against former Yukos chief Mikhail Khodorkovsky was tax evasion. Huge sums of money were stolen, and he was jailed for nine years. However, millions of companies spend huge amounts of money creating tax havens, or hiring auditors to avoid paying tax – completely legitimately. It is easy to see how today's CEO could become next week's criminal – arrested for 'creative accounting'.

3 Read the whole article. What are your reactions to the crimes / sentences mentioned in the article?

4 Find words and expressions in the article from the following definitions.

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| (a) to notice something  | (Paragraph 1) |
| (b) made to look like something real in order to trick people                      | (Paragraph 2) |
| (c) situations where important people behave in a dishonest way that shocks others | (Paragraph 3) |
| (d) give information to people, especially information that is secret              | (Paragraph 3) |
| (e) a place where people keep their money so as to pay less tax                    | (Paragraph 3) |
| (f) a way of showing figures to give a false idea, but is not illegal              | (Paragraph 3) |

(Some definitions from or based on *Macmillan English Dictionary* Text © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002)

5 Work in groups and decide on an appropriate response / sentence to these 'crimes'. Report your ideas to the class.

(A) A manager makes money for himself by insider trading	(B) A secretary forges her bosses' signatures to steal money	(C) A company director is charged with tax evasion
(D) An employee abuses the company by making regular personal calls abroad	(E) A manager awards an important contract to a company, after taking a cash bribe	(F) An employee claims £500.00 expenses for just one night