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Stop! Bear! Why Every Business Should Protect Its Confidential Information (Part 1 of 2)

It's a beautiful summer day and my husband, Kurt, and I are near the end of a majestic 12 mile hike in the Canadian rockies. It's been hours since we've seen any other hikers. As the trail winds through a steep, forested canyon we notice fresh bear scat and foraging along the trail. At each blind turn we cautiously call out "Hey, Bear!" so as not to startle any bear that may be ahead. Then my husband calls out, "Stop! Bear!" I look up to see a large black bear 20 yards ahead. "Hey, bear. Here we are." The bear sees us but doesn't react.

Without turning our backs, we retreat up the trail. The bear is heading toward us. A dried up waterfall offers a place to scamper off the trail so the bear can pass but we can only climb in 20 feet before we hit a wall of rock. My husband who stands 6'1" picks up a large stick and tells me to stand back. A minute later, the bear comes to the opening of the creek bed. He looks straight at us and climbs in. After muttering an expletive, Kurt yells out, "NO!!!" As if correcting our dog for destroying the family room furniture. The bear stops. He

turns, takes a drink and hops back on the trail. As the bear ambles out of sight, we climb down and quickly walk the other way.

What was the bear thinking? Was he just thirsty? Did he see us as his next meal? We'll never know. By standing our ground the bear backed down, but what if the bear had cubs or had been a grizzly? I don't even want to think about it. To be safe, next time we hike in bear country, we've resolved to carry bear spray.



**Black bear taking a drink.
Waterton National Park
July 8, 2008**

So, what does carrying bear spray have to do with protecting confidential information?

Intellectual property and other confidential information is the most valuable asset of any business. Failing to protect it is like hiking in bear country without bear spray. While not every employee will steal confidential information, just like not every bear will attack, it's important to have protective measures in place because waiting until the information has been taken may be too late.

Next month, we'll talk about what kind of bear spray a business owner should carry.

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