

FIRM SUES TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

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Waukesha - A temporary employment agency that allegedly placed a bookkeeper in a job where she subsequently stole more than \$45,000 was named in a lawsuit Thursday accusing it of failing to perform background checks that would have revealed the woman was a thief who twice filed for bankruptcy.

Tempsplus Temporary Service Inc. promised that it conducted "comprehensive background and reference checks on all employees" and strongly recommended the woman for an open job, according to the lawsuit filed in Waukesha County Circuit Court.

But the woman misrepresented her former employment, did not report the bankruptcies that stemmed from credit card abuse and did not reveal her retail theft conviction, the lawsuit alleges.

The agency not only did not conduct the background check, but also did not interview the woman after she filled out her application, the lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit seeks from the agency and the bookkeeper it referred, Paula Busser, repayment of the stolen \$45,000, \$11,000 in associated expenses, the return of a \$2,700 placement fee and unspecified damages for breach of contract, misrepresentation, negligence and intentional deceit.

The lawsuit was filed against the Shorewood agency and Busser, of Wauwatosa, by GSI Communications Inc. of New Berlin.

Busser and a manager of Tempsplus did not return a reporter's calls for comment Thursday.

Busser, 44, was placed on five years of probation in May after pleading guilty to theft by employee while at GSI.

The lawsuit filed Thursday says that GSI Communications, an electronics wholesaler, contacted Tempsplus in May 2000 in its search for a qualified bookkeeper. Later that month, according to the lawsuit, Busser filled out an application at Tempsplus.

"While at the Waukesha Branch of Tempsplus, Busser never was interviewed about her background, education or experience," the lawsuit alleges.

Busser was subsequently hired by GSI Communications in June 2000, and Tempsplus collected a \$2,700 placement fee, the lawsuit alleges.

"Soon after" she was hired, according to the lawsuit, Busser began stealing from GSI Communications by forging checks to herself, stealing from petty cash and overpaying herself on her paychecks.

Busser was charged with theft in August 2002 and pleaded guilty in April.

The lawsuit says that in hiring Busser, GSI Communications relied on Tempsplus' recommendation and its guarantee that it conducted a background check. Had GSI Communications known about the bankruptcies, the theft conviction and two previous jobs Busser held less than one month, it would not have hired her, the lawsuit says.