

Whistleblowing and the importance of business ethics in the workplace

The importance of ethics

Most CEOs would agree that ensuring the ethical behaviour of your employees and supply chain is integral to the success of your business, and for maintaining positive relationships with all your stakeholders. It's somewhat surprising then, that although **50% of FTSE 100 companies recently surveyed claimed to have an ethical policy in place, only 3% of these could actually provide the documentation to prove it.**¹

It's commonplace these days for ethical policies to come under public scrutiny. High profile cases such as the Leveson enquiry have pricked public interest and as a result businesses and Government departments alike are being encouraged to make their policies on business ethics public. Add to that the introduction of the Bribery Act 2010 which requires organisations to put "adequate procedures" in place to prevent bribery, and you've got a really good case for making sure that your ethics policy is communicated internally and externally, is adhered to and well-documented.

Whistleblowing hotlines

The introduction of the Bribery Act has given whistleblowing hotlines a starring role in the campaign to promote good corporate governance and ethical trade. Not only can whistleblowing hotlines protect you in a court of law by demonstrating you have the aforementioned "adequate procedures" in place to prevent bribery, but they clearly demonstrate to your employees, clients and peers that you are committed to doing business in an ethical manner and to eradicating misconduct.

When implementing a whistleblowing process it's vital to consider the following:

- Employees can speak up without fear of retaliation
- The policy is communicated effectively and comprehensively throughout the business, and responsibilities and training assigned appropriately
- What support mechanisms should be in place for those who do raise a concern?
- That data gleaned from the whistleblowing reports is used in a progressive fashion to help improve processes and optimise protection of employees, business operations and supply chain
- All possible considerations are addressed regarding international law, confidentiality clauses and levels of disciplinary action
- All employees (and where appropriate contractors and employee families) should have convenient, 24 hour access to the hotline, including translation services
- You've made provision for employees to report both disciplinary and grievance matters, as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for adopting a whistleblowing service. It all depends on the needs and strategy of your organisation. Expolink Europe are experts in the field. If you need to enhance your corporate governance strategy with a whistleblowing hotline we are here to help you every step of the way.

¹ - <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/news-events/news/whistleblowing-research.aspx>

About Expolink Europe

Established in 1995, Expolink is Europe's whistleblowing hotline market leader. We are proud to be the first outsourced whistleblowing service in the UK and Europe. Our global hotline supports over 20% of FTSE 100 companies, many FTSE 250 companies, Fortune 500 companies, local authorities, government departments, police forces, retail organisations, charities and multi-national corporates of all sizes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We work in partnership with our clients, advising on whistleblowing policy and legislation and acting as a deterrent against inappropriate and criminal behaviour; giving company leaders the information they need to take rapid, remedial action.

With Expolink's whistleblowing hotline service you will benefit from:

- Anonymity and confidentiality assured from professional, legislative-compliant staff
- A reporting system managed by real people, not impersonal automation
- Personalised and simple services designed to meet the unique needs of your organisation
- Total security – we report only to authorised recipients and our procedures are vigilant
- A UK-based whistleblowing service ensuring compliance with EU data protection laws
- Compliance with the UK Bribery Act (as per advice from Ministry of Justice) as well as all the latest laws and legislation relating to whistleblowing policy and corporate governance
- Service is extended free of charge to suppliers, clients and third parties (in some cases to employees' families)

- Management reports supplied monthly showing call analyses and trends over a rolling year including bench-marking data

We are truly committed to protecting your interests as an employer, while supporting your employees. With Expolink you'll benefit from an impartial and professional external service for the whistleblower. We're dedicated to protecting and collecting information with complete confidentiality giving your employees the peace of mind they need to speak up about malpractice in the workplace.

- We support five million employees of our clients and their suppliers
- We cover 120 countries
- We operate in over 200 languages
- 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Our whistleblowing procedure has been refined and enhanced as Government legislation and the whistleblowing needs of our clients have matured. Our approach is truly global and our knowledge of ethical business practices and international whistleblowing legislation makes us leading industry experts.

To find out more about how whistleblowing hotlines can help your business, contact our corporate governance team on any of the means below or visit our website.

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