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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants should be able to:

• Clarify HR’s sometimes contradictory ethical obligations

• Describe strategies to respond to ethical issues in a way that protects the institution and addresses employee concerns

• Create a plan for protecting their own professional reputations
Poll Question

Has it gotten harder to work in HR in the last few years?

a) Yes; it is much harder.
b) Yes; it is somewhat harder
c) I haven’t noticed a difference.
d) No; it’s actually easier.
What to do when you have a problem at work, and human resources won't help you

By Áine Cain  |  Feb. 23, 2017, 1:50 PM

TECH • 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

HR Is Not Your Friend. Here’s Why

By Claire Zillman and Erika Fry  |  February 16, 2016

HUMAN RESOURCES ➤ MANAGEMENT CAREERS

Reasons Why Employees Hate HR

What HR Managers Can Learn From Common Employee Gripses

BY SUSAN M. HEATHFIELD  |  Updated April 21, 2019

Employees hate Human Resources for a variety of reasons—some are logical reasons based on bad experiences with HR teams. Whereas other reasons why employees hate HR may actually be a reflection of the organization’s culture and management problems.”

HR failed on sexual harassment. Now what?

By Kathryn Mayer

Published  |  January 29, 2018, 3:57pm EST

After a female employee at Vice revealed to the firm’s human resources department that she had been groped at the media company’s holiday party, the HR director reportedly told her to “laugh it off,” and gave similar advice to other staffs who disclosed they had been sexually harassed.
Poll Question (check all that apply)

What has made practicing HR harder?

a) More/changing employment regulations
b) Harder to attract talent
c) Employees more empowered to express their concerns
d) More demands for pay transparency and/or equity
e) #MeToo
f) HR is increasingly blamed for bad institutional behavior
Does HR protect people or organizations?
Poll Question (choose one)

HR’s primary role is to protect:

a) The organization
b) The employees
Does HR Protect People or Organizations?

- COST
- QUALITY
- ACCESS
Does HR Protect

Yourself

Employees

Institution
At happy hour on a Friday evening, a good work friend expresses frustration about her supervisor’s management style.

“It seems like he does better with the guys on his softball team than he does with the rest of us. Frankly, I think strong women make him nervous.”
Poll Question (choose one)

What would be your best response?

a) Without revealing this to your friend, you decide to speak to the supervisor to let him know you have heard concerns about the way he treats women.

b) You strategize on ways she might forge a better connection with her supervisor.

c) Tell her you are obligated to report the concern to your institutional equity office and do so upon leaving the bar.

d) Later that evening, send your friend an email documenting the conversation and providing her with a referral to your institutional equity office.
Poll Question (choose one)

What would be your best response?

• Without revealing this to your friend, you decide to speak to the supervisor to let him know you have heard concerns about the way he treats women.

• **You strategize on ways she might forge a better connection with her supervisor.**

• Tell her you are obligated to report the concern to your institutional equity office and do so upon leaving the bar.

• Later that evening, send your friend an email documenting the conversation and providing her with a referral to your institutional equity office.
At happy hour on a Friday evening, a good work friend expresses frustration about her supervisor’s management style.

“It seems like he does better with the guys on his softball team than he does with the rest of us. Frankly, I think strong women make him nervous.”

You offered some advice about how to connect with him and expressed regret that she was so frustrated.

Four months later, you are named in a lawsuit that claims you failed to investigate gender-based inequities.
Over the course of two weeks, eight faculty members (arriving in pairs or triads) came to you to report that a search for a new department head was not managed fairly. They claim department members were scolded for asking challenging questions about the white candidate’s research presentation, despite their having asked similar questions of the African-American finalist.

They asked you to speak to the dean, but to keep their names confidential. You alerted the dean about these concerns and he revealed that he believed the white candidate was clearly the most qualified. When you suggested that this candidate would not be welcomed by the faculty, he responded, “Quality matters more than color. They will come to accept him.”

When the dean’s choice was announced, the faculty wrote a letter to the president accusing HR of supporting racist hiring practices.
Poll Question (choose one)

How could you have avoided being accused of wrong doing?

a) Sent a memo to the faculty saying that you met with the dean to share their concerns and explained that he was unwilling to change his decision

b) Urged the faculty to report their concerns to the institutional equity office

c) Met with the provost to express the risks inherent in this decision and then followed up with a memo thanking her for meeting with you and considering the concerns of the faculty

d) Explained that you would talk to the dean but were not in a position to force the dean to hire their preferred candidate and promised to let them know once you had the conversation
TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES
SCENARIO 3
Your employee relations team has received numerous complaints about a new department head in your college of science. The allegations are consistent in their descriptions: the department head is verbally abusive, makes the graduate students pull all-nighters to complete experiments, and she throws glass beakers when she gets mad.

The dean is a mercurial character and has let you know in the past that she is not a fan of HR.
When you approached the dean to express concern, she responded, “I recruited this woman here to elevate our research profile. Her team needs to get used to high standards. Thank you for dropping by.” The dean then walked you out of her office.

Two weeks later, you were called into the president’s office to respond to a viral social media campaign titled, “HR at X University endorses abusive science.”
Poll Question (choose one)

How could you have avoided being accused of wrong doing?

a) Sent a memo to those who came forward saying that you met with the dean to share their concerns and that she was considering the issues they brought forward

b) Engaged a senior faculty member who is close to the dean to stress to her that she is facing a dangerous situation

c) Scheduled another meeting with the dean to say you have been thinking about the situation and that you continue to feel she is personally at risk if she fails to take action and that you will have to elevate this issue if it is not addressed promptly

d) Met with the provost and general counsel to express concerns about the dean’s apparent lack of concern
TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES
The Problem With HR
For 30 years, we’ve trusted human-resources departments to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment. How’s that working out?
How can you build yourself a shield of armor...?
Be more than the “HR Person”
Ensure your team is diverse
Serve on project teams
Be the dependable one
Build a diverse internal network to help you connect organizational dots
Author articles and blog posts

Let people know where you stand
Speak on panels and at conferences
Use social media
Publicly Address Injustice
Forward articles
Professional organizations

Strive for local and national connections
Community organizations

Be known as a vital volunteer
THE INNER CIRCLE OF TRUST
Be proactive
Be clear about next steps
Assume nothing
Expand your circle of trust
Questions?

Thank You!

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Thank You!

And HR Did Nothing!' — Navigating in a Gotcha Culture

September 17, 2019

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