



Prevention

Information is the life blood of organisations. Quality information not only improves business strategies it can also negate bad business practices. In many cases the best information that organisations can receive is from staff members. They are the eyes and ears of the organisation, particularly when it comes to knowing about malpractice and other inappropriate behaviours. That said, it has been well proven that while work malpractice may be occurring, staff members tend to remain as bystanders and do not report the practices. Unfortunately, organisations are continually surprised that staff members did not report information before the matter became an issue or worst still, a crisis.

This reluctance to report stems from the fact that it is deemed to be a cardinal sin in Australia to report a colleague for malpractice or other corrupt behaviour. However, most organisations know that without receiving information about inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, they will be behind the eight ball when it comes to implementing corruption prevention strategies.

Notwithstanding, there is perhaps no definitive way of approaching misconduct prevention. The primary role of those charged with preventing such conduct, is to understand the organisation's exposure to the risk and to continually evaluate how they are performing in reducing such exposure. The routine activity theory proposed by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen as far back as 1947, argues that for a crime to occur, three elements are required:

1. there will be a motivated staff member
2. there will be a suitable target
3. there will be an absence of a suitable prevention or intervention strategy.

When it comes to one and two, it can be difficult to eliminate these elements. However, providing suitable prevention and intervention strategies are achievable and can be a cost-effective way to prevent malpractice.

Reducing exposure to corruption, malpractice and other unwanted behaviours can be achieved by complementing existing integrity policies with an independent anonymous whistleblowing strategy. Such an approach will convey to employees the organisation's seriousness about encouraging reporting and preventing retaliation. It will probably be the best investment an organisation can make towards the building of a corruption resistant workplace as it allows organisations to receive important information and to take action before a matter becomes serious.

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