



Now Hear This: Preventing Sexual Harassment Claims

By J. Trent Scofield

November 2017

It seems that almost every day, another high-profile executive, politician or celebrity has now been accused of scandalous sexual harassment directed at subordinate employees. This topic not only increases news ratings, its real effects devastate workplace morale and subject corporations to substantial liability. Proactive employers should consider the following steps to minimize risk and foster a corporate culture of trust and respect.

- 1) **It Starts at the Top.** The highest level of any organization must clearly state the company's commitment to maintaining an environment that will not tolerate any type of harassment. Corporate leadership must be engaged and available as a resource to address employee concerns. Leading by example is the best practice.
- 2) **Find the Problems.** Employers should not assume that "no news is good news" and that a quiet workplace is harassment-free. Sometimes the absence of complaints may only indicate that employees are unwilling to come forward. Tools such as employee attitude or workplace climate surveys – usually anonymous – can provide a snapshot of workers' honest feelings about sexual harassment, among other things. This feedback is a valuable tool in finding ways to improve employee morale.
- 3) **Expand Your Training.** Don't simply go through the motions during the company's anti-harassment training session. Simply having a policy and reporting procedure is not enough. Managers must understand how to promptly and effectively address any claim of sexual harassment, along with the process involved when investigating such claims. Likewise, management must be committed to maintaining a culture based on mutual respect. These simple steps can reduce the threat of sexual harassment in your workplace.

To discuss further, please contact:

[J. Trent Scofield](mailto:tscofield@burr.com) in Birmingham at tscofield@burr.com or (205) 458-5149
or the Burr & Forman attorney with whom you regularly work.

No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.