Executive Summary of Survey Results
December 2017

Harassment Prevention: it’s everyone’s responsibility. Yet, the values of mutual respect and kindness sometimes lose their way in the workplace. More recently, it couldn’t be more visible than in the form of sexual harassment which has taken a more prominent role in challenging workplace culture and ethics.

With the daily news full of high-profile cases, the topic of sexual harassment certainly gets people talking. Although Midwest employers report receiving about the same number of sexual harassment complaints as prior years, the more recent prominence on the subject has also started a national conversation.

What are Midwest employers doing to prevent harassment? What are they doing to educate all employees, enforce or establish policies, and rid their workplaces of this problem impacting organization culture, productivity and more?

MRA – The Management Association, a not-for-profit employers association conducted a survey to identify frequency and severity of sexual harassment complaints, support from executive leadership in addressing inappropriate behavior, as well as actions employers are taking to prevent harassment in the workplace.

Methodology:
- Brief 14 - question, online “hot topic” survey.
- Data collected November 17 – December 1, 2017.
- MRA member organizations totaled 244 participants; mainly mid-sized employers with a significant manufacturing presence.

The Workplace Impact

From Hollywood to New York, from politics to the workplace, sexual harassment has been getting a lot of media attention lately. Survey responses indicate Midwest employers have created and promoted a workplace that deters harassment. A vast majority of Midwest employers report receiving less than one sexual harassment complaint per year, on average.

About 30% receive 1-3 complaints per year, and of those complaints, less than 25% of the accused are in a leadership role. Most employers indicated that the nature of the behavior is about the same as prior years signaling that the severity of complaints hasn’t increased.
Employer Response

Employers are implementing many policies/tactics to proactively address and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The most frequent actions are implementing a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation (51%), updating their harassment prevention policy (48%), and providing regular harassment prevention training for all employees (44%).

Top 6 Methods Used to Prevent Harassment

1. 51% Implementing a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation
2. 48% Updating our harassment prevention policy
3. 44% Providing regular harassment prevention training for all employees
4. 39% Making a concerted effort to change our culture, to strive for a workplace of openness, transparency and respect
5. 38% Utilizing a defined process for investigating harassment complaints
6. 34% Providing regular harassment prevention training for supervisors/leadership employees

Harassment prevention training is typically done in-person and usually lasts one hour or less. Many employers are proactive and supported by executive leadership in their prevention training.
In the event that unlawful sexual harassment has occurred, the majority of Midwest HR professionals are confident their recommendations are supported and executed by executive leadership.

However, almost one-third of respondents indicated that their recommendations after an investigation are not supported or executed due to a number of issues surrounding:

✓ who is the accused;
✓ what is his/her performance, tenure, skill set and/or connections;
✓ whether complaints are taken seriously by leadership.

Comments in the survey provided directly by participants point to a number of obstacles HR practitioners face related to sexual harassment in the workplace, including: 1) perceptions that certain behavior is acceptable, 2) changing a culture that is dismissive, 3) harassment that is tolerated and not reported, and 4) conducting a thorough investigation in a timely manner.

**Final Thoughts**

The employers’ role in harassment prevention and in keeping employees safe, well-trained, and supported by their employer is paramount. Employers need to make concerted efforts to inform, monitor and strive for a workplace that follows core values such as care, concern, openness and respect. Clear communication is essential so employees understand what acceptable workplace behavior is and what it is not. A code of conduct or workplace ethics policy is helpful in establishing expectations around workplace behavior.

If employers allow harassment of any form to flourish in their workplace, they will pay a high price of declining employee morale, productivity, safety and other essential culture attributes and additionally, increase the likelihood of lawsuits and negative publicity.

Widely accepted best practices to prevent harassment - sexual or other - in the workplace involve endorsement by leadership of a strong policy prohibiting harassment, workplace training, and a process for complaints that is supported by the company and protects workers from retaliation.

Maintaining or advancing the responsibility of thorough processes, dialogue, investigation and appropriate action to address harassment are called to attention in this survey. The time is now for pledging commitment to a safe and respectful workplace.
MRA’s Solutions for Every HR Need

We are professionals dedicated to partnering with you to address your organization’s needs around your strategy and your competitive edge to attract, engage, and retain critical talent!

**HR Expertise 24/7**
Call MRA’s HR Hotline with your questions managing harassment complaints and civility in the workplace. From HR best practices for critical compliance topics to providing a sounding board for complex employee situations, we are your extra pair of hands while you focus on your business. **Call 866-HR-Hotline (866-474-6854) or InfoNow@mranet.org**

**HR Resource Center**
MRA’s HR Resource Center consists of sample policies, forms, articles, and a *Workplace Harassment toolkit*—all designed to save you time! The documents have been created by HR Professionals for HR Professionals. Relevant. Practical. Customizable. At your fingertips.

**Training and Development**
MRA has been helping employees become more successful in the workplace for over 115 years. Training programs and e-learnings are practical, interactive, and down-to-earth, including our *Harassment Prevention training* for managers and supervisors.

**Investigations**
MRA’s professionals will work with you throughout the investigation process to ensure a cost-effective, efficient resolution with the least workplace disruption – by tailoring an investigation and resolution strategy to meet your specific needs.

**MRA Publications**
*HR Digest and Inside HR* - MRA summarizes what you need to know so you can stay up-to-date on the latest HR news (including harassment) and respond to critical business developments.

**Compensation, Benefits, Trends and Custom Surveys**
Good business decisions require specific answers to your tough questions. MRA’s custom research will get you the information you need to take the right action. In addition, find solid benchmarking data to develop total rewards packages that attract and retain great hires. MRA wage, salary, and benefits survey reports are free to participating members.

*Questions? Contact: MRA’s Survey Department*
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