

Whistleblowing Introductory Toolkit

Through an ethical systems lens, whistle blowing empowers workers to speak up for principles and ethics and shines a light on unethical practices that can cause economic and reputational risks for organizations as well as negative consequences for consumers, citizens and colleagues.

Whistle Blowing

Factors That Inhibit Reporting Misconduct



- Decentralization
- Organizational culture
- Toxic Leadership
- Potential reactions to the whistle blower

Vadera, A. K., Aguilera, R. V., and Caza, B. (2009). Business Ethics Quarterly

Creating an Ethical Culture

Implement structures and policies that visibly protect and incentivize internal reporting	Make ethics part of the core organizational values	Leaders must be active listeners and role-models of integrity
		



Organizational Priorities

In an ethical organization, internal whistle blowing serves as a powerful mechanism to protect and grow the economic, legal, and reputational value of a business.

To make this shift, organizations need to prioritize ethics and create a culture of integrity and speaking up.

Research has shown that the most important factors that influence reporting intentions and behavior include:

- Leadership
- Perceived support
- Organizational justice
- Organizational culture
- Type of organization
- Risk of retaliation

Ideas to Apply

Consensus seems to be that organizational context strongly influences the whistle blowing process and experience. Congruent to systems thinking, these 4 nudges help make internal reporting work:

1. Make ethics part of the core organizational values

- Establish a code of conduct and incorporate in recruitment materials, employee contracts and internal policies

2. Create structures and systems that visibly protect and incentivize internal reporting, i.e. particularly speaking truth to power (and sanction retaliation)

- Institute robust and effective [Compliance and Ethics programs](#)

3. Leaders act as role-models and active listeners to promote cultures of speaking up

- [Hire and develop leaders who exhibit ethical behavior and influence ethical cultures](#)

4. Apply a systems approach, including:

The individual dimension

- What characteristics influence intentions and reporting behavior? (to come)

The organizational dimension

- How can you encourage employees to speak up?
- In what ways does leadership and organizational culture predict behavior?

The legal dimension

- How do laws and rewards, like the SEC Whistleblower Program, influence the whistleblower's behavior, the process, and organizations?

Research Entry Points	
	<p><u>The National Business Ethics Survey® generates the U.S. benchmark on ethical behavior in American corporations</u></p> <p>The latest report shows improvement on how companies conduct work while it yet again highlights the severe problems of reporting behavior and retaliation against whistle blowers.</p>
	<p><u>An integrative analysis of past whistle blower research highlighting consistent and inconsistent findings</u></p> <p>Vadera, A. K., Aguilera, R. V., and Caza, B. (2009). Making sense of whistle-blowing's antecedents: learning from research on identity and ethics programs. <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>, Vol. 19 (4), pp. 553-586</p>
	<p><u>Comprehensive article about the quandary of becoming a whistle blower</u></p> <p>The New York Times, Alina Tugend (September 20, 2013). Opting to Blow the Whistle or Choosing to Walk Away.</p>
	<p><u>The impact of financial rewards for whistle blowers on American and multinationals organizations</u></p> <p>The Economist (2011, November 17). The Year of the Bounty Hunter.</p>
	<p><u>Ted Talk on ordinary people who dare to speak up in the name of progress</u></p> <p>“The Dangers of Willful Blindness” - Margaret Heffernan</p>