

6 Ways to Get the Most Out of Your Whistleblower Program



Whistleblower tips are a critical component of detecting workplace fraud and other types of misconduct. According to the ACFE Report to the Nations on Fraud and Abuse, whistleblower tips result in earlier detection of fraud schemes, as well as reduced losses.



Have a Whistleblower Policy

Include a whistleblower policy in your employee handbook and train everyone – at every level – in your organization on the policy. In the case of an exception, document why the policy wasn't followed so that you can justify your actions.

Include in the policy:

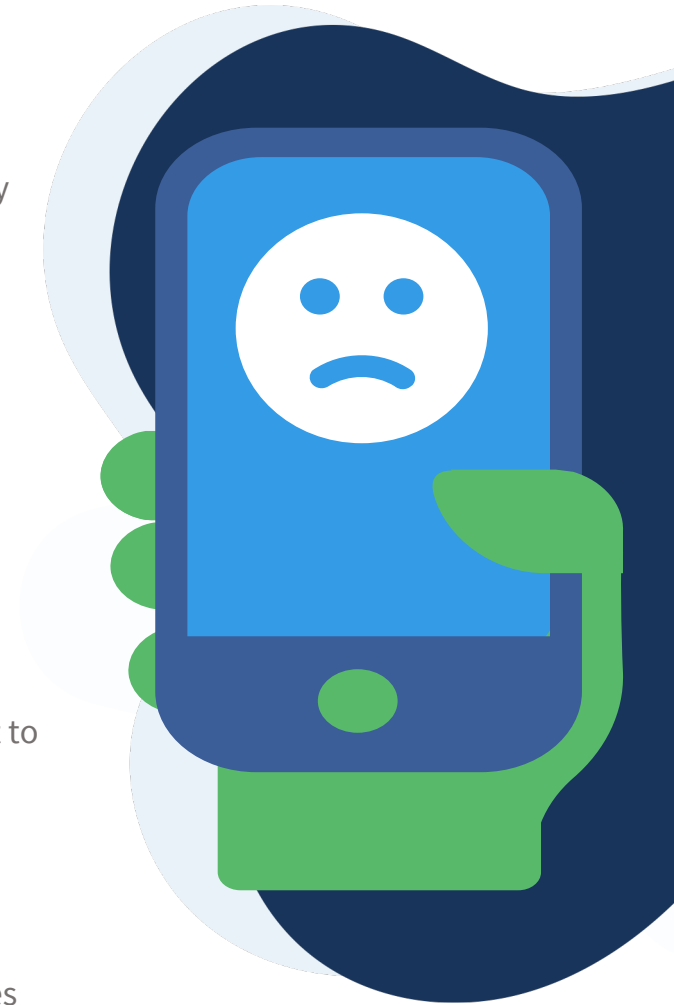
- How to assess credibility of tips
- Information on whistleblower protection
- How to handle legal issues, such as criminal activity
- Intolerance for retaliation

Most whistleblower tips come from employees within the organization, so it's important to put mechanisms in place to encourage internal reporting. Every company should have a way for employees to report anonymously.



Offer Multiple Reporting Mechanisms

Make it easy to report misconduct. In your policy, and in your organization, let employees know the different methods for reporting misconduct and provide them with the necessary information – such as hotline numbers or web page addresses for intranet forms – so they know where to report misconduct.





Have a Hotline

Hotlines must be accessible 24 hours a day. Some employees feel more comfortable calling in to report an issue from home. Use a live operator instead of an automated system to make the person reporting the misconduct feel supported.



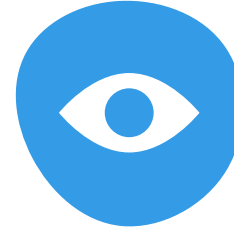
Follow Up

Establish a protocol for following up with whistleblowers after they've made their complaint – whether a full investigation is going to be carried out or not. They need to know that you took their complaint seriously and took the time to look into their concerns. A whistleblower program that includes follow-up is more successful, as employees feel their concerns will be addressed.



Use Case Management Software

An easy way to track incoming complaints, follow-up actions, investigations and closed cases is to use a case management software solution. A case management system collects hotline, webform and call center reports and keeps cases in a centralized location for tracking/reporting.



Address Anonymity

Put mechanisms in place to ensure anonymity for those who request it. Should a manager or an investigator need more information regarding a complaint, consider assigning a number or code to identify the individual. Include a statement on anonymity in your policy to let employees know that you will protect their identity, but that there are certain cases in which anonymity may not be possible. In those cases, reassure the whistleblower that everything will be done to protect them.

