

Whistleblower Policies and the CEO

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Is your leadership, workforce and institution fully protected by up to date “whistleblower and employee harassment” policies? In this increasingly litigious environment, and with many institutions eliminating or re-aligning positions for fiscal stability and missional effectiveness, the incidents of personnel complaints appear to be increasing. It is imperative that governing Boards regularly review the existing personnel policies and practices, with appropriate legal counsel, to ensure that concerns are handled fully and fairly.

Christian organizations, with their enhanced emphasis on the dignity and worth of individuals, must be alert to incidents where employees feel bullied, harassed or in other ways subjected to what they believe to be discriminatory and/or toxic workplace practices. Frequently personnel in these settings are hesitant to report concerns out of a desire to respect authority, not disrupt mission, historical experiences of non-action and/or fear of reprisals.

In reviewing Board governance policies and practices, I find that most institutions have sufficient guidelines for training, monitoring and reporting in place ensuring the proper handling of such matters - except for those involving the CEO/President. When personnel complaints are registered involving the chief executive, governing boards need specific procedures, clearly outlined in both their own and human resource policies, to ensure these are addressed quickly and fully. Sometimes, I find hesitancy with Boards to have these outlined for their senior leader. This process is demanding and uncomfortable. However, failure to have these in place, and clearly communicated, leaves the Board at risk for not fulfilling its responsibilities to ensure the CEO is functioning responsibly and effectively within established and monitored policies. And it leaves the CEO's effectiveness and reputation vulnerable without appropriate process to resolve such complaints.

Given the difficult realities of today's challenges, leaders are facing greater scrutiny in every area of their responsibilities. When governing Boards have well-articulated policies in place to review such complaints and challenges, both the effectiveness of the leader, and the integrity of the mission, are benefited. If I can be of assistance in reviewing your executive oversight policies and practices in these challenging times, please reach out to me at djgyertson@gmail.com for a no obligation discussion.