Different Speak Up Systems

Speak Up Systems

Background

The core reason why firms choose to develop speak-up systems in the modern workplace is to promote whistleblowing and honesty throughout their organization. Whistleblowing has many definitions depending on one's outlook of the situation. According to Boatright (2000), whistleblowing is defined as “the voluntary release of non-public information, as a moral protest, by a member or former member of an organization outside the normal channels of communication to an appropriate audience about illegal and/or immoral conduct in the organization or conduct in the organization that is opposed in some significant way to the public interest” (p. 109). However, some employees may view whistleblowing as a breach of trust and view it as ‘double-crossing’. Another crucial reason that firms promote speak-up systems is that there are many benefits associated with having an appropriate speak-up system, these benefits impact employees and society along with the organization.

Benefits

The main organizational benefits that often encourage firms to implement speak-up systems are the development of stronger trust levels within the institution and the prevention of financial and reputational loss which, in the future, may lead to the downfall of an organization. These benefits often coincide or contribute to the benefits associated with employees such as developing trust which allows the employee to be more committed to their work and their organization. When an employee is improving in the workplace it often contributes to company organizational success, for example, a good and trusting work environment encourages employees to work harder, therefore, being more productive. Speak up systems also help prevent retaliation as if there is a shortage of any necessary procedures implemented for an employee benefit it may cause retaliation as they may feel neglected or overlooked.

Although often overlooked these speak-up systems also, on a smaller scale, benefit society as they protect public interests and helps the society to develop and allows for society to have trustworthy organizations (Fotaki et al., 2017.).

Speak up systems

Through the case study of Tastys family restaurant, it is clear that any form of a speak-up system is necessary for organizations to prevent any issues arising, these issues include high staff turnover, low morale or productivity, accounting issues, and related future issues. This is seen through an in-depth analysis of the repercussions associated with the situation at Tastys, where Ginger refuses to report any wrongdoings whereas Emily does. Possible effects included resentment towards Emily, higher staff turnover, financial losses incurred through stealing and replacement costs, and the possibility of criminal charges. According to research recently carried out by Kenny et al., (2019) it was concluded that it is crucial to incorporate a number of different speak up systems and to also “involve a combination of different channels through

which employees can voice a concern”, these channels include internal, external and digital channels (p. 5).

In an organization with numerous franchises, it is important to have at least one main internal person in which employees can voice their concerns, for example, having a Human Resource director or head of compliance operate with an open door policy encourages open communication in the workplace. However, many employees often prefer to remain anonymous as they fear any form of retaliation that may hinder their reputation and any future developments in their careers. Along with a key internal person, I think it would also be beneficial to incorporate an online speak-up system in which employees can voice their concerns and can choose their anonymity or not. An online system can also solve certain barriers to responsiveness such as language barriers, anonymity, legalities, data protection, and repercussions. This online system also incorporates a digital channel along with an internal system further benefitting the company and any employees. Although old-fashioned commonly adopted, I find review sheets would be very beneficial, especially to non-multinational companies with different franchises such as Tastys. For example, if every employee is given a review sheet they are more inclined to complete it as they can choose their anonymity, it's easily accessible and easy to complete. In this case, it is easier for an organization to include another function in its system. These review sheets can often include other information that an employer considers important or necessary and may then offer better statistics on certain issues.

It is often harder for smaller organizations to incorporate an external channel as these are often operated at a higher cost to a large number of employees. Due to the development of technology in recent years, many large organizations are beginning to use smartphone apps to document any concerns. Mobile apps are useful as they are fast, convenient, easily accessible, and can generate the necessary data required by the organization more efficiently than other sources.

Successful Implementation

To ensure that these systems are successful it is important that they are implemented and used correctly. There are different steps an organization can take to be certain of its success. It is important for any company to have a code of ethics and compliance, this sets out the principles that the organization surrounds itself on and believes in. The information regarding all speak-up policies being implemented should be included within the code of ethics or conduct (as generally, employees are reporting ethical wrongdoing) and should include; all resources available for speaking up, information regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and compliance. The newly developed system will not be beneficial if employees have no knowledge regarding the code of ethics, conduct, and speak up systems, therefore, it is now the organization's responsibility to ensure all employees, including managers and directors, are constantly trained and aware of the details regarding the speak-up systems and how to use them. As previously mentioned, trust is essential to a firm and a speak-up system is an excellent method of further enhancing trust. To do this, those responsible for the speak-up systems must be responsive to any concerns raised, as “[it] is management’s response that shapes the potential whistle-blower’s subsequent actions (Rothschild & Miethe 1999: 119-120). According to research carried out by the United States Department of labor in 2016 out of 3402 reports studied throughout the year, 1715 cases were dismissed (Whistleblowers.gov, 2019). It is important to respond appropriately and if possible notify employees regarding any progress, e.g in the

anonymous online system/chat, it should be mandatory that the employee is contacted regarding any updates, and in the case that the report is being dismissed it should state any reasons and an opportunity to respond should be given. It is also valuable for an employee to be aware that the organization takes them and their concern seriously and investigates the situation. In the interest of best practice, along with policy and oversight, a review is also important once the outcome of any raised concern has been decided. Documenting and reviewing all concerns that are brought up is useful as it can highlight any reoccurring issues or patterns and allows for intervention in the early stages. This process is also useful for showing the most successful speak-up channels and allowing for improved development.

It is clear through the study of whistleblowing and the case study of Tastys family restaurant that speak-up systems are crucial in any business, whether it is a multinational or a startup company. Throughout this essay, we saw that there are numerous benefits associated with speak-up systems including low staff turnover, financial benefits, and employee-related benefits. However, it was also noted that the different speak-up channels have to be implemented and used correctly in order for organizations to develop trust and obtain any of the benefits associated with speak-up systems and whistleblowing. The number of whistleblowing scenarios is slowly increasing over the years which makes speak-up systems an important aspect for businesses to consider in regards to the future of their organization.

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