

Building Effective Reporting Systems Within Businesses

Sarah Sawyer: Welcome to this week's OK at Work with myself, Sarah Sawyer, my colleague Russell Berger, both attorneys at Offit Kurman. And today we are talking about what happens when employees, managers, executives are working in the business, and maybe they discover something is not going well, there's some type of issue, someone's reported something to them, they see something that's not quite right, they see an issue that's arising, and what they should do in that moment, and how business owners and, chief executives or people, at the top of the food chain, so to speak can help empower those people to make sure that they are reporting those things up.

'Cause especially as your business grows, obviously the more people you have, the larger operation, the more moving pieces, the harder it is for you as the business owner or you as the [00:01:00] executive team to see everything that's going on. 'Cause if you're doing a lot of the things that we've talked about here on OK at Work as far as creating other positions and hiring people and not wearing too many hats yourself, then you have delegated things to people, and you have a team, and you have a lot of moving pieces going on.

What are some ways, Russell, or things that people should be thinking about as it relates to making sure that those things reach the people that they need to reach, those issues that come up?

Russell Berger: Yeah. Start Answering that question on the compliance piece of it. There are certain types of reporting that you have to have a channel for reporting because, if there's harassment, discrimination, improper conduct in the workplace, you've gotta have a method for reporting that.

In a lot of organizations, that's usually, written as a direct route to HR. Obviously not all organizations are big enough to have an HR department and if it's not the HR department, you need, an answer, whether that's someone who's leading operations or direct to the leader of the organization.

And if it's about that person, you need an alternate [00:02:00] option. if you have an HR department, it's obviously easier 'cause there could be multiple entry points into HR, and if someone, has a comfort level or a trust level with one person or the other have a little bit of flexibility there.

And, a Female who is made to feel uncomfortable by a man in the workplace might not wanna report that to a male manager. They may wanna have some kind of option to reporting. These are things to think about as you build that out.

But generally, if you've got HR or you have some kind of quasi HR, like that's where you want those types of complaints to go. But you also need to have clear reporting structures on the operational side to inline managers. And, not necessarily for the employment compliance issues, although as managers, if they find out about those things, they have to get them to HR as a matter of law, and should hand it off to HR, but they might even if they're the ones to hear it 'cause it doesn't go direct to HR.

But you want them to be in line on the operational issues for sure. So it's really important to stress to managers the need to build open lines of communication with the people that they supervise.

Sarah Sawyer: Yeah, no, great advice. And I think it's most [00:03:00] challenging for leaders who feel well-liked within the business, or they're really gregarious, and they feel like they have good relationships with those in their business.

It's hard for them to remember the perspective, I think sometimes too, that people might not feel comfortable coming to them on certain topics or certain things, or with certain issues that are going on. So I think it's always good to stop and check that perspective, especially the bigger the company gets, the more layers, the more complexities.

'Cause it's so easy, I think, as a leader to be a strong leader and be a good leader, and just assume that of course people are gonna come to me. Of course they're gonna talk to me about this. We have a great relationship. I've always been responsive to whatever they need.

I've always been responsive to their operational concerns. And that all might be true, but it also might be true that something that they would wanna bring to someone's attention, that they're gonna have some nervousness or concern about bringing it to that leader's attention for a variety of reasons.

And so it's good to check that perspective, make sure you have those pieces in place. That's something I [00:04:00] definitely see with companies that go from being owner run and operated, the owner's really in the business, they're smaller, and then they grow. Sometimes that's something that, that perspective hasn't changed.

It still feels like a family. It still feels like you're saying team members. We're not saying employees. We're all a close-knit group, and sometimes that piece gets missed.

Russell Berger: Yeah. Absolutely.

Sarah Sawyer: Well, thanks Russell. We'll see you next time.

Russell Berger: Thanks, Sarah.