

# A Cautionary Tale: What You Can Learn From The Sexual Harassment Allegations At Uber

---

March 3, 2017 | by Andrew Berns

Many readers may have recently become aware of stories relating to the ride-share giant, Uber and its problems relating to sexual harassment and a potentially pervasive environment at its corporate offices where such behavior may be prevalent. Despite its progressive policies, upper level management at Uber claims it was caught off guard by the recent allegations and knew nothing about the sexually charged work environment in real time. Of course, Uber has pledged to take definitive actions to combat these behaviors. Additionally, and maybe as importantly, Uber pledged to implement policies so that those harassed will have internal outlets to expose such actions, (even when HR is not an option), while also making sure the CEO and other upper level managers are provided with information so they know what is occurring with the rank and file in the workplace.

This case is an opportunity for companies large and small to take appropriate precautions and to take away several important lessons. Upper level management, including CEOs, have a responsibility to be aware of the internal climate of the workplace and be advised of all allegations of sexual harassment. When any company becomes aware of negative behaviors in the workplace, they should not hesitate to promptly and firmly address them, possibly bringing in someone with expertise in this area to perform an independent workplace investigation.

In the Human Resources area, there will be circumstances, for all kinds of reasons where HR professionals, as employees of an entity, fail to properly and adequately address complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace. If such a circumstance arises, you should promptly consider providing employees with access to off-site, third party professionals as an avenue to bring complaints in an unbiased, non-judgmental and objective environment.

Keep in mind that the increase of social media has given disgruntled employees multiple outlets to air their grievances or complaints concerning an employer. These employee-friendly recommendations may prevent unwanted or disparaging information from being posted. It may also be advisable to

consider occasionally supplementing or updating your harassment policies. Finally, it is never inappropriate to send a company-wide memorandum reminding the workforce that the company has a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment.