

Internal whistleblowing the silver bullet

Voicing concerns and proposing alternative working practices can improve any institution. The benefits of internal reporting (whistleblowing) are not limited to conflict resolution and healthy relations between employers and employees. Institutions should be obliged legally to establish channels whereby those employees who have moral, financial and legal concerns can get a fair opportunity to voice such concerns without danger to their position or standing in the company. As De George (1999: 240) said, expressing such concerns should be considered a demonstration of company loyalty and should be rewarded appropriately. Companies should be obliged to establish a position of Ombudsman to hear complaints or moral concerns, or an independent committee of the board might be established to hear financial and legal concerns and/or complaints. A further step could be that someone might be paid by the institution to present the position of the would-be whistleblower who would argue for what the company should do from a moral point of view and not what management would like to hear or do from a profit point of view.

In Namibia, trade unions and professional organisations should become concerned about the untapped potential of internal whistleblowing and/or the lack thereof. They should defend and support members who are prepared to blow the whistle to improve the institution. Unions can establish channels of their own to which members can report concerns, propose crea-



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tive ideas and follow-up on appropriate action. Institutions should start treating whistleblowers not as troublemakers, but as people making an effort to come up with solutions to work-related problems.

Employees are often in better positions than employers and managers to identify blind spots and weaknesses. If internal reporting mechanisms exist, such actions can inspire employees because it can harness and reward their creativity.

Martin Luther King as cited in Time magazine by Lacayo and Ripley said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter". What are you and your institution doing to ensure you do not die a premature death?

• References

- De George, R.T. 1999. *Business Ethics*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
Lacayo, R. and Ripley, A. 2003. *Time, Persons of the Year*, Vol 160, No.27, December 30, p. 39.