

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is a key tool for promoting individual responsibility and organisational accountability by “raising a concern about a malpractice within an organisation” (Tilley).

In other words, whistleblowing is the disclosure of improper conduct to the proper authority for moral reasons. The motive is moral reasons and not self-interest as in merely informing others. A whistleblower is a concerned citizen who is motivated by public interest, who initiates out of his/her own free will a disclosure about an unethical activity to a person or organisation that has the capacity to investigate the complaint and facilitate the correction thereof.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABUSE

If internal whistleblowing (staff members do not report corruption in the institution) and external whistleblowing (customers and stakeholders do not report corruption in public) is not part of the institutional culture, it creates lucrative opportunities for abuse of power and/or protecting of incompetence, for the covering up of gross negligence and other more severe manifestations of corruption. Whistleblowing enhances transparency and accountability, and creates a culture of disclosure, declaration of conflicting interests, openness, and trust between employers and employees, the government and the public, customers and service providers. These characteristics are all cornerstones for good corporate governance (King). Institutions in the United States of America (USA) and Australia are probably the most advanced in terms of whistleblowing legislation and cultures



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of openness. For example, it is common practise in the USA to criticise the President publicly, without being victimised and intimidated. In some developing countries, whistleblowing is practised, but it does not mean that whistleblowers are immune from being intimidated and even murdered. If institutional whistleblowing mechanisms exist, it can prevent fraud, and constructively deal with discontent and conflict. Such mechanisms can also resolve unfairness, prevent exclusiveness, self-justification and non-transparency, which are all obstacles blocking development and co-producing corruption. Articles that follow will focus on institutional cultures that block and/or prevent whistleblowing, how institutions can benefit from whistleblowing, extreme cases of whistleblowing, different whistleblowers and types of whistleblowing, and strategies to enhance public reporting of corruption.

• References

- King, M. (2006). *The Corporate Citizen*.
 Tilley, A. (2005). *Making Whistle-blowing Work*,
Executive Business Brief, 6, (4), August/September, 7.

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