



## **Steps to a Successful Workplace Investigation**

If white-collar crimes or other types of misconduct are alleged to occur in your workplace, do you know how to address the situation?





Many different situations can trigger a corporate investigation — fraud, theft of physical assets or intellectual property, employee drug use, sexual misconduct, etc. — and it's important to recognize that such crimes can do as much damage to a company as threats from external sources.



**(Step 1)**

## **Determine who will handle the investigation.**

After evaluating the situation, the next step is deciding whether to conduct an investigation using your HR department or other in-house personnel, or opting for a skilled, experienced private investigator. Among the benefits of choosing the latter option are:

- The presence and expertise of an unbiased third party
- A professional who is adept at interviewing witnesses and collecting information
- A person with experience in the legal system (i.e., testifying in court)





(Step 2)

## Conducting interviews.

This remains the most effective way of gathering key information. Interviews should begin with the employee accused of misconduct and the employee who has lodged a complaint or accusation. Any witnesses of the alleged wrongdoing also should be interviewed in order to gain a fuller picture of the situation.



(Step 3)

## Gathering documents.

Documentary evidence might include personnel files, email or text messages, correspondence, formal company policies in writing, etc.





**(Step 4)**

## **Evaluating the evidence.**

Assess the results of the interviews and the evidence collected, first to determine exactly what happened and where the blame lies. Corporate investigations are often uniquely positioned for this task, based on their experience and objective approach to the situation.



(Step 5)

## Communicating during the investigation.

Often, companies launch an investigation but fail to inform the appropriate individuals of its progress. This lack of communication, according to labor and employment law attorney Catherine S. Wright, “results in the complaining party believing their complaint was ignored, which may prompt them to involve an attorney.”





(Step 6)

## Take Action.

Finally — and most importantly— a corporate investigation must result in action being taken. Whether this involves termination, disciplinary action and/or a change in workplace policy, a decision regarding the alleged misconduct must be made and communicated to all appropriate internal audiences.





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