

Gender Quake II

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Many years ago I authored an article entitled “Gender Quake” and it was about the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings – the first time sexual harassment and gender equity issues entered our living rooms (through TV) and never left. Almost like a tsunami of gender insensitivity. Before this – Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas - sexual harassment issues did not make the newspaper or even local news – not even a blip or a mention. Now, national, international news and hours of coverage (educating public) on the nightly news and cable is the norm, new normal.

We just experienced another major Gender Quake – Gender Quake II, I will call it. Fox News, Ailes and O’Reilly are now out. Tens of millions of dollars are changing hands with the funds of a publicly traded company (were the stockholders informed?). Next up – Marine Corp, Sterling/Kay/Jared Jewelers – more public attention to these issues are in the media scrutiny pipeline and will constitute “continuing aftershocks.”

You see, as a Sexual Harassment Prevention Trainer, Consultant, Coach and Strategist I have been to this rodeo before (been doing this for 25 years), but I do see changes – tectonic shifts in the national conversation.

What are the Lessons Learned from Fox News Scandal?

- Is our corporate culture – our workplace climate - gender friendly, inclusive (diversity friendly and welcoming)?
 - Corporate Culture – what people do when no one is watching – MV
 - Where were the “men of Fox News” – why did they not speak up for the victims? I am sure they saw something, heard something – HR must investigate even gossip, or hearsay
 - What was the impact on turnover, morale, hiring?
- There is no such thing as hush money – the money the target/victim receives to leave the organization (they don’t stay silent, “word gets out”) quietly, discreetly
- Once these issues get into the public sphere – social media and traditional media get a hold of it – there is an immediate impact (stock price hit for example) on brand, brand loyalty, customer mindset, corporate image (Ailes, O’Reilly might affect pending merger for FN)
- The mobile phone is the new “evidence generator” with an audio, video tape, voice mail or text the victim has evidence (not saying necessarily admissible in court) but harasser cannot deny or say “I did not do that” or “I don’t remember”
 - You see if we don’t get the harasser on the actual harassment, we will get them on the lie and cover up - *we do our fair share of investigations and audits*

- Capitalism will prevail – legal fees, settlement monies, advertisers abandoning, customers boycotting – the cost of “keeping the harasser” is too great – *Fox News numbers do not include legal fees, turnover (morale), recruiting challenges*
 - Did Fox News “Do the right thing” or “Was the math just not working anymore?”
- Leadership of the Organization will be questioned – When did you know? (if you knew for a long time and did not remove harasser organization is liable for institutional issues – “Prior Knowledge” - cover up, greater liability?) – *Oh the litigation and scrutiny at Fox News is very far from being over – look back to “Tail hook, Aberdeen”*

Ultimately Be Proactive, Not reactive – Risk Management 101 – “Affirmative Defense” 101

- Check your policy – make sure it is clear and up to date (with clear reporting processes)
- Make sure there is a formal and trusted complaint process (*DTG even serves as an Ombudsman for clients*) – there are people you can go to besides your own boss and you are “allowed or encouraged to go outside your department” and they are trusted
- You have conducted training – recently, regularly (once every year to two, CA every year) – “live, in-person” for Supervisors and Managers – e-learning for all (1 hour workshop) is not enough
- Lastly when something happened – the organization responded quickly and decisively

A Checklist - Questions for any organization that does not want to be the “Next Fox News”

- What does your policy say? Does it protect and clearly define consequences of a “false accusation?” Back door has to be closed and tight, not just the front door.
- When was your Policy last updated? *Came across a client with no policy*
- When was your Policy last distributed? *Came across a client that had never distributed*
- Who can employees go to – to complain?
- Do you have a “hotline” and are all of your complaint processes and procedures trusted and have high integrity? Do you have an ombudsman service in place? (3rd party outside channel for complaints)
- When was the last time you conducted training for all of your employees, specifically for your supervisors, managers, and leaders? *If you cannot remember – get busy rolling it out.*
- How quickly does HR and the organization respond to complaints?

Gender Quake – my first article - it was very interesting to go back and read that article and see how far we have come and/or not come. Remember, I have been doing this

work for over 25 years (DTG is 22 years old) and a funny observation or reflection I will leave you with....

My mentor was Linda Shevitz – she taught me everything she knew about sexual harassment, gender equity, etc. When she led workshops she was labeled “a radical feminist” and I could do the same workshop and people would comment - “very thought provoking, very enlightening.” Same workshop, same content. How far have we really come? As I like to say – “Economics trumps hate. Capitalism often prevails over morality.”

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