Introductory Concepts for Investigations

Meric Bloch

A Good Investigator Knows . . .

• Your ultimate goal is to learn the truth.

• You are not the company’s morality police.

• Your investigation can be undermined if your actions can be undermined.

• You are accountable to the company for every part of your investigation.

• Your investigation may affect someone’s career, their reputation and even their freedom.

• If you conduct a poor investigation, you may create legal liability for your organization, hurt its reputation, and undermine a “speak up” culture.
A Good Investigator Knows...

- Your findings are based only on the evidence and not what you believe happened.
- A substantiated allegation is likely the result of a perfect storm of factors.
- You should identify root causes of substantiated misconduct to improve business operations.
- A bad investigation is worse than no investigation at all.

Elements of a Workplace Investigation

- A collegial fact-finding that arrives at a rational conclusion.
- Thorough interviewing of the Reporter, the Subject, and fact witnesses with relevant information.
- Gathering and analysis of relevant evidence.
- Comparing the evidence to the applicable standard.
- Assessing the credibility of each investigation participant and the strength of his / her evidence.
- Reaching a legally defensible determination of whether the improper conduct actually occurred.
Ethics of Investigation

• Your tactics must be reasonable and legitimate.
• You are competent to conduct the investigation.
• You already have a factual basis to warrant an investigation.
• You consistently follow the regular investigation process.
• You give procedural fairness to all investigation participants.
• Your findings are supported by the evidence you gather.
• Your investigation files are retained according to company policy.

Confidentiality in the Investigation

• You may promise confidentiality but not secrecy.
• You may use gathered information only for investigation purposes.
• You must keep the existence of the investigation confidential.
• You may not guarantee anonymity to Reporters and interviewees.
• You must keep the identity of the Reporter, Subject and interviewees confidential.
• You must protect the confidentiality of any documents you created during the investigation.
Procedural Fairness

• An investigation decision is fair, reasonable and supported by the evidence.

• An investigator is independent and gives participants a fair hearing.

• Being unbiased is a crucial aspect of procedural fairness. The investigator is impartial and open-minded.

• Justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done.

• An investigator may not have a connection to the participants or a stake in the issues under investigation.

• The roles of decision-maker and investigator are undertaken by different people.