Organisations need to recognise the courage it takes to raise a concern, says a new Guide from the Institute of Business Ethics

Thursday 9 November, 2017

“We should celebrate these guardians of ethical culture, however uncomfortable it is for management to hear what they have to say,” says Katherine Bradshaw

9th November 2017 : The freedom to raise concerns without fear of retaliation is a core component of a supportive ethical business culture – one where employees are confident they will be supported to ‘do the right thing’.

In the IBE’s latest Ethics at Work survey, a fifth of British employees said they had been aware of misconduct during the past year. This level of awareness has been relatively consistent since the survey began in 2005. However, only half of those who witnessed misconduct said they raised their concerns. The most prominent reason they gave for keeping silent is that they fear it would jeopardise their job (30%), while nearly a quarter believed that corrective action would not be taken.

Encouraging a Speak Up Culture is the latest IBE Good Practice Guide. It examines practical ways that organisations can encourage a Speak Up culture by establishing a procedure to give employees the confidence to raise concerns about anything they find unsafe, unethical or unlawful without fear of retaliation. If companies do not support their employees in this way, they risk a concern becoming a crisis.

Drawing on a benchmarking survey of IBE subscriber companies with case studies from organisations like AIB, BT, Diageo, Lancashire Constabulary, the NHS, Rio Tinto, Serco, SSE and Smiths Group, **Encouraging a Speak Up Culture** shares examples of how successful organisations implement their Speak Up process and investigations, to encourage a Speak Up culture.

> Katherine Bradshaw, author of the Good Practice Guide, said: *“It is one thing asking employees to speak up, but quite another to listen to what they are saying. If employees repeatedly speak up and don’t feel heard, they might stop talking. And that silence can be dangerous. Those who speak up protect lives and livelihoods and should be recognised.”*
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> Philippa Foster Back CBE, IBE’s Director said: “*An increasing number of organisations are striving to create an open culture in which individuals feel free to speak up and raise any concerns they may have. This Good Practice Guide offers practical advice and case studies to help embed an effective process into a supportive Speak Up culture.*”

#speakup

ENDS/

To obtain an advanced press copy of the report, or to organise interviews, please contact k.bradshaw@ibe.org.uk

EDITOR’S NOTES

Encouraging a Speak Up Culture: an IBE Good Practice Guide
By Katherine Bradshaw
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The IBE's latest Good Practice Guide – Encouraging a Speak Up culture – will be launched with a special panel event which looks beyond a whistleblowing policy at practical ways that organisations can give employees the confidence to raise concerns about anything they find unsafe, unethical or unlawful.

Katherine Bradshaw, author of the Guide, will chair the panel made up of public and private sector to discuss the challenges – and some of the successes – in establishing a Speak Up culture.

Panel members include: Dr Henrietta Hughes – NHS National Speak Up Guardian; T/CI Pauline Stables – Lancashire Constabulary; Hugh Bigwood – Rio Tinto; Stewart Hughes - SSE

Please email events@ibe.org.uk if you would like to attend.

The Institute of Business Ethics

The Institute of Business Ethics, whose purpose is to promote high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values, is an important partner to any business wanting to preserve its long-term reputation by doing business in the right way.

For over 30 years, the IBE has advised organisations on how to strengthen their ethical culture by sharing knowledge and good practice, resulting in relationships with employees and stakeholders that are based on trust.

The IBE is a registered charity funded by corporate and individual subscriptions. www.ibe.org.uk @ibeuk

The author: Katherine Bradshaw

Katherine Bradshaw is Head of Communications at the Institute of Business Ethics. She is the author of four other IBE Good Practice Guides. The most recent of these – *Communicating Ethical Values Internally* – is now on its second reprint.

She has a particular interest in how stories create an ethical culture and writes scenarios for ethics training, both for the IBE's training and bespoke training for organisations, including film scripts and e-learning content. She developed the IBE's e-learning tool Understanding Business Ethics, a 30-minute course to sensitise employees to recognise and deal with ethical dilemmas.

She is also an advocate for responsible business communications, having written and presented on the subject for professional bodies like CIPR, IABC and PRCA as well as the IBE.

The IBE would like to thank Expolink and Safecall for their financial support for this project.

Founded in 1995, Expolink is Europe's longest-established provider of independent whistleblowing hotlines. Today it offers a uniquely comprehensive speak up service supported by highly-configurable case management software.

Expolink's user-focused approach gives employees the confidence to speak up about wrongdoing and unethical conduct in the workplace. By combining empathetic, in-house report handling with the widest choice of intake channels, it aims to make the speak up experience easy, secure and reassuring.

Expolink works with a global client base that includes some of the world's largest brands and institutions, spanning virtually every sector. Working in close partnership with them, its services help organisations minimise risk in order to protect their employees, reputation and profits. www.expolink.co.uk

Safecall is a UK based leading global provider of ethics hotline and online reporting systems.

The Safecall service provides employees, contractors and suppliers with a safe place to speak up about potential ethical or legal concerns. We are trusted by national and international organisations, helping to protect their reputation and support a culture of integrity and openness, while simultaneously meeting the challenges posed by regulations, cultural differences and language barriers.

Safecall is wholly owned by Law Debenture Corporation Plc. Law Debenture is as a leading British-based investment trust that also provides a range of independent professional services. These services include appointment of agents, directors and trustees for pension funds, trusts and companies.
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