

# #MeToo: What is the Real-World Effect of this Movement?

Article provided by HRFix



HRFix currently provides HR Consulting Services for hundreds of employers across the United States representing approximately 48,000 employees. Rarely, in the past, did a day go by when we did not receive at least one “harassment” complaint from one of our clients’ employees. However, most of those complaints centered around a claim of “Hostile Work Environment” and, once investigated, involved managers who raised their voices or cursed at an employee. Although this may be considered unprofessional, it is not a violation of workplace rights.

All of this has changed significantly in 2018! We have experienced a tremendous increase in sexual harassment claims from our clients’ employees. What is significant about this increase is that it has almost always involved

more than one complainant. In fact, the last three sexual harassment investigations I have conducted on behalf of our clients have included multiple complainants. In two of the situations, none of the complainants involved were aware the other complainants in the organization were also being harassed by the same person.

Once these people became aware they were not alone, they came forward, raised their hand and stated “Me Too!” This begs the question as to whether or not these situations really happened, or if people were just jumping on the bandwagon for attention, job protection or a quick check. Thus far, I have not experienced what I would consider ulterior motives on the part of the complainants.

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One of these ladies stated she did not want to come forward and risk losing her job, or risk the possibility she may not be believed. When I asked why she felt this way, she informed me of an incident which occurred when she was 16. She then explained she was sexually assaulted by an uncle. Unfortunately, the majority of her family did not believe her. Even worse, many made her believe it was her fault because of the way she dressed and flirted. Because of these contributing factors, she was fearful to come forward. She further explained that she did not immediately come forward because she is a single mom and, if she did not work, her daughter did not eat. She was all her daughter had and believed she would risk losing her job should she complain.

This person was not jumping on a bandwagon for attention—complaining and being involved in an investigation was the last thing she wanted. She was very embarrassed because her fear had allowed this person to do the same thing to others. It was only after she felt she would be believed, and she was not alone, that she had the courage to come forward! I can tell you, each of the last two incidents I have investigated all passed the smell test of authenticity.

I am asked quite often how many of the harassment claims are real and how many have ulterior motives. While it is very difficult to provide exact statistics, if pressed, I would feel comfortable stating approximately 70 percent of all complaints of sexual harassment are real and have merit. Then there are approximately 25 percent of which are situations where the alleged offender did not intend to harass but, instead, was either flirting or trying to be funny and, ultimately, offended someone who was offended easier than most. Less than 5 percent are situations in

which the claim is completely false and is nothing more than an attempt to save their job, get their supervisor in trouble or in some manner create a diversion.

The #MeToo has been a good thing for individuals and companies alike. It has given those who previously remained silent a voice to speak out. As we all know, harassment in the workplace can destroy morale, productivity and retention of good employees. Having the mechanisms in place to reveal these hidden secrets can only make the workplace better!

The very best thing a company can do today is create a process to make it easier for these individuals to come forward and to survey your work environment so, when notified of an issue, it can be investigated and resolved as soon as possible. If you would like to receive in-depth suggestions of how to best do this, please contact our office at 866.240.6618.

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