

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace – Employee Engagement & Awareness

A practical plan

This communications plan template recommends practical options to reach and engage employees efficiently and effectively. You will do this by tweaking current tactics and adding new ones to support them. Keep it simple and focus on the basics.

Key questions for effective communications with employees include:

- How can we engage employees more in programs and training?
- Are the right communications reaching the right people at the right time?
- Are the delivery modes appropriate for our employees?
- How do we best talk with, rather than talk to, employees?

Who are your employee audiences?

Employees can be reached collectively, but they also fall into groups that can be a target audience for tailored messages and channels. These include:

- Frontline workers
- Administrative staff
- Managers
- Departments and units
- Unionized employees
- Maintenance staff
- Senior managers, executives, owners

Employees can also be divided into groups such as:

- New employees
- Influencers
- Leaders

The nature of the audience helps to determine the key messages for that group and the appropriate tools to reach them.

How do we connect with employees?

We know employees like face-to-face communications such as meetings, training, and events, even if participation or engagement is not as robust as we would prefer. Employees also appreciate digital and hard copy communications, like email, brochures, posters, and fact sheets. Channels present an opportunity, because welcomed communications get more attention – and open the door for even further engagement.

It is helpful to understand the demographics of your employee group, if possible. This often helps determine the best approaches and materials to reach them with.

The goal is to create material that is attention-getting, relevant, and clear.

Communication Tactics That Stick

Marketers use the term stickiness: advertisements that are memorable because they stick with audiences long after the campaign is over – and achieve a goal, be it awareness or sales. Think of Wendy's "Where's the Beef?," Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty," and the War Amp's "Play Safe."

Sticky campaigns are successful because they:

- Frame everything in terms of audience needs versus straight information;
- Have a simple and concrete message;
- Use humour, emotion or the unexpected;
- Encourage participation

With the Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Bystander Training, you are promoting safety, ethical behaviour, and organizational support. This communication will build on existing avenues of connection with employees and existing levels of trust.

Key Messages

While there is much to tell, picking and staying to a few main topics focuses audience attention.

Repeating core messages across many communications and channels is more impactful than covering a dozen topics in one or two ways. Your three main messages might be:

- **This is a health and safety issue** – the need for employees to feel secure and respected while on the job is paramount. Under the law you must have a policy to ensure prevention and response to sexual harassment in the workplace.
- **We all have a role to play** – A workplace is a community, and members of a community look out for one another. Bystanders play a critical role in reaffirming an employee's personal space, their right to say no, and their right to feel – and to be – safe at work.

- **We have zero tolerance for sexual harassment in our workplace.** Quite simply, sexual harassment is wrong on every level and will not be tolerated. We want employees to want to come to work, to know they can speak up safely, and have the support of management and colleagues.

Recommended Deliverables and Tools

Informing and engaging employees does not need to be complicated, time consuming, or expensive. The following tools are recommended to build awareness, interest, and understanding of sexual harassment in the workplace and the Bystander Training program.

Email Outreach to Launch and Help Sustain the Program

- Initial outreach can be a simple email letting employees know you are planning a special training program for everyone. Details to follow.
- Followup emails over a three- or four-week period can build greater understanding and interest in the **Bystander Training**. Eventually the program and its purpose will be explained. Questions should be encouraged (It may be helpful to have the emails come from a respected co-worker, workplace influencer, or HR rep. If unionized, and if agreeable, the email could come jointly from the organization and the union).
- Post-training, a thank you should be sent to all employees that also states the organization's commitment to a safe workplace. This should come from a member of senior management. If you want to stand out, this could be a postcard sent to all employees at their home address or left on their desk/work area.
- One month, three months, six months, and 12 months post-training, emails should be sent to employees highlighting learnings from the training and encouraging further discussion.

Ongoing engagement

- An FAQ fact sheet should be prepared for distribution to all employees following the training. This will answer questions raised by the training and perhaps directly by employees.
- Fact sheets should also be prepared for employees to read online and/or in print format. The topics could mirror issues discussed in the training including what is sexual harassment and the role bystanders play.
- The policy should be sent to all employees as a draft asking for feedback or a small group could be tasked with drafting a version for comment from all employees using the LISNS template as a starting point. Employee feedback could be obtained in a town hall, in staff meetings, or mirroring

the approach used for training.

- Once approved, the policy should be distributed to all employees as final. Request employees read the policy and complete a short quiz. This will help to reaffirm the seriousness with which the organization takes the issue and instill a sense of accountability.
- The policy should be posted on the organization's website.
- A review of the policy could be led by supervisors/managers at regularly held staff meetings, if this is part of the ongoing operation of the organization.
- If the organization has safety check-ins with staff, this is an optimal time to introduce the training and provide the link for staff to go through it.
- Reinforce the training messaging with posters on bulletin boards, in lunchrooms, and in other areas where employees congregate.
- Make the **Bystander Training** a core component of new hire orientation.
- Run the training annually for all employees.
- Prepare an info kit for managers, if helpful, that provides them with information and resources to keep the dialogue going with staff throughout the year.
- Create a series of social media posts (may include Did You Knows, infographics, or other key messages).
- Develop a PowerPoint presentation to be used by managers, employees in relevant roles, HR, and executives.
- Prepare a series of articles for the organization's newsletter, intranet, or other media, if available.
- As part of the training, employees could write down three takeaways from the training and three goals for the next year. These could then be mailed to them a year later.
- An email survey should be sent to employees following the training and one year out to assess their understanding of the issue and their reaction to the training.
- Host an annual *Respect in the Workplace Day* where this and other issues can be discussed and a respectful culture reinforced. There could be a display, a lunch and learn, cake in the lunchroom, and social media posts.