

6th Regional Integrity Week – Alliance for Integrity

Workshop to develop whistleblower channels with a gender and diversity perspective

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Thursday, 28 October 2021, 08h00 GMT -5/10h00 GMT -3

Summary

The objective of this session was to collaboratively identify challenges and best practices applicable to the development of corporate whistleblower channels and processes by incorporating a gender and diversity perspective. What characteristics, tools and management model should a gender-sensitive whistleblower channel have?

Speakers:

- Daniela Camargo - Elizabeth Portillo
- Inés Castrasena - Karina Kalpschtrej
- Isabella Dangelo - María Pía Bravo
- Natalia Gherardi - Mariam Estigarribia

Main challenges

- In some Latin American countries, integrity programs are still being implemented in an incipient way, so it is even more challenging to implement integrity policies with a gender perspective.
- It is necessary to generate work spaces free of violence.
- One of the main challenges identified has been to achieve top management commitment, which is an obstacle when it is evidenced only in writing on paper, and in practice there is no real leadership reflected by example.
- Another challenge is to introduce the gender perspective, in the organization's risk assessment so that all measures and mitigating measures can be taken according to the risks detected.
- Disinformation is the main enemy in processes with a gender perspective. The aim is to try to achieve a better understanding of the subject by the members of the organization.
- Lack of interest on the part of workplaces in including diversity and non-discrimination policies.

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Best practices shared

- The "Present" certification seeks that organizations incorporate inclusion policies and that these are explicitly considered in writing. The certification targets the incorporation of diversity policies, such as an anti-harassment policy for LGBTQ+ workers and an equal benefits policy.
- The certification also encourages the inclusion of policies and practices to support transgender people during transition, and argues that it is possible to start working during these transition processes instead of waiting for regulations.
- The example of the organization "Supermercados Peruanos", which has more than 20,000 employees and has policies regarding labor harassment; sexual harassment; relations between employees; abuse of power; anti-discrimination. The aforementioned organization has diversity programs and guidelines for dealing with cases of domestic violence.

Future recommendations

- The indispensable characteristics that should be provided for in gender-sensitive reporting channels are the following: confidentiality; transparency; anonymity; safety and security; diversity training; flexibility; adaptability; speed of service; empathetic staff to take the report.
- The report takers should be highly trained and such training should include the promotion of empathy. There is a strong need for empathetic report takers.
- It is extremely important to ensure the establishment of security mechanisms for the complaints channel, to be cautious about the response time to be given to the complainant and to give him/her sufficient assurance that his/her case will be attended to.
- There should be a code of ethics and a code of conduct among employees; it is important to have well established responsibilities, since the manuals and policies establish the guidelines to be followed.
- Training should be provided for the personnel who take the complaint in order to know the procedure and provide a rapid response. To this end, the organization should define the guidelines beforehand in order to achieve a faster and more effective response to complaints.
- Companies should be aware of their responsibility to respect human rights. Whistle-blowing channels must be legitimate, equitable, transparent, compatible with human rights and a source of reliability.