

Sexual harrassement vs. public relations

[Life](#), [Relationships](#)



Public Relations vs. Sexual Harassment Eric Reidenbach CGD 318 Professor LaKisha Bryant August 12, 2010 Public Relations vs. Sexual Harassment Sexual Harassment can be a huge distraction and could destroy a businesses workenvironment. The effects are damaging to an organization and do not only affect the individual being harassed but also fellow employees, the harasser, and the organization. Sexual harassment is when someone uses sexual behavior to control a person, whether it is behavioral or physical in nature, which makes you feel uncomfortable.

This paper on this issue will include what exactly sexual harassment is, the effects on the sexual harassment has on the person, employees, and workplace, and the different procedures and processes to prevent such cases. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sexual harassment is define as: “ Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individuals employment: (2) submission to, or rejection of, uch conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual: or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (Paludi, Michele A. , Barickman, Richard B. , page 3). ” Some of the most common forms of sexual harassment charges come because a person feels they are being harassed or singled out when they lose their job, benefits or privileges or more commonly when they are fired because they reject a sexual advance from a superior.

This form of sexual harassment is the most common in that a superior often times will promise a person job security if they do sexual favors for them. However, if that person refuses the advances the boss or supervisor wills often times fire that person figuring that they do not want that person telling others what happened and by firing them they have control of the situation. Most times sexual harassment is a sense of power for the accused and they feel that with the power they have that they can sway the judgments of others, and often times do so until someone stands up to them.

The second type of sexual harassment is when the harassment interferes with an employee's ability to perform his/her job duties and it creates an intimidating work atmosphere. Often times this is caused by fellow employees, supervisors, or outside vendors or business people. This type of harassment usually involves flirting, physical contact, whistling, sexual pictures or jokes, and so on. As stated previously, there are two types of sexual harassment that may occur in the workplace. Sexual harassment can occur in any number of circumstances. For example, the victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man.

The victim does not necessarily have to be of the opposite sex either. In addition, the victim does not necessarily have to be the one being harassed, but could be anyone that is offended by a person's conduct, and the harasser's conduct must be unwelcome. While the conduct of the harasser must be unwelcome, it must also be undesirable. The harasser's intent and behavior are based on the perception of the victim. Many times the one being accused of harassment may not even know he did anything wrong if

he was just telling a joke to a friend and a fellow co-worker was near by and overheard the joke and took offense to it.

In addition the harasser's intent or joke may not be sexual in nature at all, but their actions may be taken as sexually suggestive or uncomfortable by others. Therefore, we turn to how sexual harassment affects the person being harassed. In general, most people would assume that women are the ones in this economy to be sexually harassed then that of men, and you would be right. However, More than 200 men file sexual harassment charges each year with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, that's about one-tenth of the number of cases filed by women.

But more men will experience sexual harassment over the coming years as women assume more positions of power in corporate America. In addition to this stat The American Psychological Association estimates that 71 percent of working women will be subjected to sexual harassment during their careers. These stats alone show how sexual harassment is typically known as just being a problem for females, but as times change and women become more valuable and highly regarded in the workplace, that sexual harassment is now becoming more of a problem for men as well.

The effect on an individual who is being harassed is crippling and can affect them in many ways. When being sexually harassed the victim's job performance, life, and family and social relationships could be negatively affected. A person's job performance will almost definitely be affected as they may be afraid to say anything to anyone there as they may feel that no one will ever believe them and that they are just trying to damage their supervisor's reputation. Not only will they be hesitant about saying anything,

<https://assignbuster.com/sexual-harrassement-vs-public-relations/>

but they will also be weary of all that they do as not to lead on the person dealing the harassment.

The effects of sexual harassment will not end there as when the victim goes home they may feel as if they are cheating on their spouse by not saying anything or taking action against the harasser and it may make them irritable and ruin their relationship at home. Even in the case where the person does report the harasser they may still deal with issues outside the workplace in the case that the supervisor is well respected among the community and no one may believe the victim and think they are just making up stories to get ahead in life.

It is because of these perceptions of sexual harassment that many people keep sexual advances and harassment to themselves and do not say anything. In many cases as well, the victim may choose not to say anything as they will be afraid of how the workplace will take the accusations and how the news would affect the company. For this reason it shows how the person is not the only person impacted by a sexual harassment accusation but how the workplace is affected as a whole as well.

When a case of sexual harassment arises everyone is affected including fellow employees, supervisors, and managers as they will all be questioned and asked if they have ever noticed anything going on before. This is what you call a hostile work environment and no one ever wants to work in that type of a workplace. When this happens the productivity almost always diminishes, integrity and trust is tarnished as a whole, it becomes difficult to manage, and the public's image of the company is at risk.

For these reasons this is why many companies when faced with sexual harassment charges choose to deal with the case outside of court and make a settlement that way. If the company chooses to fight the charges then they risk them losing the case and ultimately losing valuable respect within the public's image in the situation that they lose the case. I guess you could call this way of settling a fail-safe as the company does not want to give up but they also do not want to lose the case and in return lose customers and business and go bankrupt or close.

By settling behind closed doors and out of court the company ends up saving possibly millions of dollars and being able to move on without having the whole world knowing about what happened. Once this is dealt with it is then up to that company to deal with the problem inside its doors and getting the company's employees moral back up and back to working. So, in the case that you are being sexually harassed you should simply start by asking the person that you feel is harassing you to stop what they are doing and if they do not that you will be forced to take action and file a complaint.

Many times this simple act can save a lot of trouble for both parties and the work force. However, if the problem does not end there then you will be forced to report the issue to higher authorities and have them investigate the situation and take care of it. This is why it is very important that every job addresses their employees on how to deal with harassment in the workplace, because harassment charges adversely affects all components of the organization. Everyone in the organization should understand what harassment is, the danger, and how it can be prevented.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace, and the employers should take all the necessary steps in order to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. There are a few steps that can be instituted by organizations to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. The first step is to develop a written sexual harassment policy prohibiting harassing conduct, action, and behavior. The policy should be distributed to all the employees and state how they have the right to work in an environment free from harassment.

It should also inform them how when they report harassment that they are also safe from retaliation from reporting a person and that any type of retaliation is a violation of state and federal law. The second step is to communicate these policies to all the employees in the workplace. This can be done in many ways and the most common form is by providing training seminars annually to keep these policies fresh in everyone's minds so that they know what can happen to them if they choose not to listen.

Other ways to communicate these policies to the employees is by having it in the employees handbooks, and by having the policies posted in many different places throughout the companies buildings and workplace. The third and fourth steps are to have a procedure that all the employees know on how to file a complaint. In addition to that step then the employer then should take appropriate remedial actions to investigate an employees complaint or allegation.

By the human resource department and employer taking action they show the other employees that they do care about their employees and decrease the likelihood that something like this will happen again in the future. In

conclusion I felt that a case study would best describe a lot of what I have just talked about and in this case the book from the ebrary called Internal Affairs: The Abuse of Power, Sexual Harassment and Hypocrisy in the Workplace. In this book they talked about a case in which a 28 year old woman filed a sexual harassment case against her manager and stated: My personal relationships suffered so much that I can't really talk about it. I know that I am having trouble trusting people, certainly men. I hope I will be able to go to work for someone again, someday, but I just don't know. I've lost my passion for work, I guess. Within a year, I have been sexually harassed, lost my job, my health insurance, and my credit rating, and was faced with great debt and a long climb back to where I was, careerwise. I won \$113, 000, in the end. How much did it all cost me? In my heart, it cost me everything I was, everything I had, and everything I hoped to be someday.

You tell me how you can convert that into money. You Can't. No one can (p. 197). " Maggie's situation is one many women and men are faced with after a sexual harassment case in which even if they win they are stuck with many bills and many other difficulties in wondering if they are less superior than others. Many times when someone is faced with the question on whether or not to file a case they will look at a case like this and figure that it may be best to just keep quiet and ride it out. No one ever wants to lose their personal relationships, job, or respect for just being honest and open about someone else victimizing them.

Unfortunately, our world is cruel sometimes and we have people that are just in it to protect themselves no matter how much it hurts others. To every case however, there is another side of the story so I found it very interesting

<https://assignbuster.com/sexual-harassment-vs-public-relations/>

to see how Maggie's work superiors responded to her case. The owner of the business responded and said: " My legal fees are averaging five figures a month. Our public relations agency has added to our needs a crisis plan with a \$200, 000 budget attached to it. I'm in for a million dollars, at the very least, and Shawna's t her desk, figuring out on her calculator how much she can keep after after taxes. The other employees are split on how they feel about her, Frank can't manager her anymore, so she's free to do whatever she wants. other employees resent that she's not doing her share of the work. We haven't had decent numbers come out of that office since the claim was filed (p. 198). " The companies response to the claim being filed against their manager, Frank, shocked me as it seemed as though they were only focused on the money they were losing and the work not happening because of the case.

It seemed as though they were forgetting the issue at hand and just looking for ways to rebuild there name and keep the business alive. I understand as a growing company you need to do all you can to keep the respect of your business to protect your name for your publics, but at some point I think you need to address the issue and the harasser as well. In the end, Maggie won less then a third of what she was looking for and lost her sense of who she was and many of her friendships, she was no longer comfortable working.

On the other side the company lost it's credibility and many of the employees resented their job and did not feel like they were being treated fairly with Maggie just sitting around not doing much of anything. In addition to the millions of dollars for attorneys and human resource people, the company also had to budget \$200, 000 for a crisis management with public

relations. This is why many times you see companies just settle outside of court so that they save all that extra money and are not forced to budget in all those additional legal fees.

It does not say how the company made out after this case but I would assume that they lost the respect of their other employees and the respect of many of their clients in knowing that there was a sexual harassment case going on inside the workplace. Overall, sexual harassment is a crippling subject for workplaces and no penny should be left unspent in educating the employees on the varying forms of sexual harassment and what could happen if you do not take heed to the warnings.

There is ultimately no end to sexual harassment ever coming in my mind and the only way to ever tackle this problem is to just keep on telling the employees about the problems with it and what may come of it if they choose to not listen to the warnings. Maybe more articles about the harassers in sexual harassment cases and how it affected them and how no place would hire them because of their past, maybe that will put a scare into people and keep them from sexually harassing others.

Books talking about cases such as Maggie's and telling us how her life is no good anymore is not helping people want to report sexual harassment cases and are only helping the harassers feel like they can get away with it.

Bibliography Barickman, Richard B. , and Michele A. Paludi. Academic and Workplace Sexual Harassment: A Resource Manual. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991. Cameron, G. T. , Wilcox, D. L. , Reber, B. H. , & Shin, J. Public Relations Today: Managing Competition and Conflict. Boston, MA: Pearson Edu. Inc, 2008. Hearn, Jeff R. , and Pauline Wendy

<https://assignbuster.com/sexual-harrassement-vs-public-relations/>

Parkin. *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organizations: The Unspoken Forces of Organizational Violations*. 1 ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 2002. Neville, Kathleen. *Internal Affairs: The Abuse of Power Sexual Harassment and Hypocrisy in the Workplace*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999. Saguy, Abigail C. *What is Sexual Harassment? : From Capitol Hill to the Sorbonne*. California: University of California Press, 2003. Taylor, Joan. *Sexual Harassment: A Non-Adversarial Approach*. NYU Press, 2001.