



# FAIR & COMPLIANT WORKPLACE INVESTIGATIONS:

Building Trust & Accountability.  
Ensuring Fair, Consistent, and  
Legally Compliant Resolutions

## CASE STUDY



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# TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT	1
OVERVIEW	2
CHALLENGE	3
OBJECTIVE	4
SOLUTION	5
IMPACT & RESULTS	8
LESSONS LEARNED	9

*"A structured and fair investigation process isn't just about compliance—it's about building a culture where employees feel safe, heard, and valued."*



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1

# OVERVIEW

Ensuring workplace investigations are **fair, consistent, and legally compliant** is critical to fostering a **culture of trust, accountability, and integrity**. Without a structured approach, organizations **risk bias, legal exposure, and employee distrust**, which can negatively impact workplace morale and retention. This case study highlights the implementation of a **standardized investigation framework**, leading to **faster resolution times, increased employee confidence, and improved compliance**.

## BACKGROUND

A rapidly growing **tech company** faced challenges in handling workplace misconduct allegations, including **harassment and discrimination complaints**. With no formalized process in place, cases were **delayed, inconsistently managed, and legally vulnerable**. Employees lacked confidence in HR's ability to address concerns **fairly and confidentially**, creating an environment of uncertainty and mistrust. To **mitigate legal risks and strengthen organizational culture**, HR implemented a **comprehensive investigation protocol**, standardizing procedures from **intake to resolution** while ensuring compliance with labor laws and company policies.



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2

# CHALLENGE

At a **rapidly scaling tech company**, an employee reported **ongoing harassment** by a senior manager. The complaint, submitted through the company's anonymous reporting system, alleged **inappropriate comments, exclusion from key meetings, and intimidation**. The company, which had **recently expanded** from **100 to 1,000** employees, **lacked a formalized workplace investigation process**, leading to several challenges:

## Inconsistent Case Handling:

Without a **standardized process**, complaints were handled **informally**, leading to **inconsistent outcomes**. Some employees received verbal warnings, while others faced escalation, **creating perceptions of bias and favoritism**.

## Legal & Compliance Risks:

Lack of **structured documentation** left critical details **incomplete or missing**, increasing **liability risks**. If a legal claim arose, the company had **no clear records** to defend its actions, exposing it to **compliance violations**.

## Erosion of Employee Trust:

Employees feared **retaliation or inaction**, leading to **hesitation in reporting** concerns. Without clear confidentiality safeguards, rumors spread, **reducing engagement** and trust in HR's ability to **handle issues fairly**.

## Delayed Resolutions:

Investigations stretched for **months**, causing **workplace tensions** and **productivity loss**. Employees **left the company**, feeling ignored, while unresolved issues increased the risk of **repeat misconduct**.

These challenges highlighted the **urgent need for a structured, fair, and legally compliant investigation framework** to **restore trust, consistency, and accountability**.



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3



# OBJECTIVE

To address **bias, ongoing inconsistencies, legal risks,** and **employee distrust**, HR developed and implemented a **structured workplace investigation framework** that ensured:

## Fair & Unbiased Investigations

A structured process ensured **equal treatment for all cases**, reducing **favoritism**. Investigators were trained to follow **neutral questioning** and **evidence-based decisions**.

## Confidentiality & Legal Compliance

Strict **confidentiality measures** protected all parties, preventing retaliation. Legal counsel ensured alignment with **EEOC guidelines and labor laws**.

## Consistent Case Handling

A **clear policy, timeline,** and **case tracking system** ensured all complaints were handled **promptly** and **consistently** from intake to resolution.

## Increased Employee Trust

A **transparent process** helped employees feel confident in **HR's fairness and accountability**. Regular **HR and manager training** reinforced trust and consistency.

This framework created a **fair, efficient,** and **legally** sound investigation process, ensuring **trust** and **accountability**.



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4

# SOLUTION

## Implementing a Structured Workplace Investigation Framework

### STEP 1: ESTABLISHING A CONSISTENT PROCESS

To ensure **fair and efficient case resolution**, HR implemented a **step-by-step investigation protocol**:

#### Complaint Intake & Initial Assessment:

- HR acknowledged the report **within 24 hours**, ensuring the employee felt heard.
- The case was **classified as high-priority** due to the power dynamics involved.
- A **neutral investigator** from HR was assigned, removing any **conflict of interest**.

#### Investigation Planning:

- HR defined the **scope, timeline, and key stakeholders** for the investigation.
- The company's legal team was consulted to **ensure compliance** with EEOC and workplace harassment laws.

#### Interviewing Involved Parties:

- The complainant provided **detailed accounts of incidents**, including dates and witnesses.
- The accused manager was interviewed separately, ensuring a **neutral and respectful approach**.
- Additional **witnesses were identified**, including employees who had observed inappropriate behavior.

#### Collecting & Reviewing Evidence:

- HR gathered **Slack messages, emails, and project documentation** related to the complaint.
- Performance records and meeting logs were reviewed to **assess any patterns of exclusion**.
- Interviews were documented **factually**, preventing **interpretation bias**.



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5

# SOLUTION

## Implementing a Structured Workplace Investigation Framework

### STEP 1 CONTINUED:

#### Determining Findings & Resolution:

- The investigation found **substantiated evidence of inappropriate workplace behavior.**
- HR partnered with leadership and legal counsel to recommend **corrective action.**
- The senior manager was **issued a formal warning** and required to undergo **harassment prevention training.**
- The complainant was offered **additional career support** to ensure no retaliation occurred.

#### Communication & Follow-Up:

- The complainant was informed that **appropriate action had been taken** while maintaining confidentiality.
- HR monitored workplace interactions to ensure **no further escalation or retaliation.**
- The case was closed **within four weeks**, improving resolution efficiency.



### STEP 2: CONDUCTING FAIR & THOROUGH INVESTIGATIONS

To prevent future **legal and reputational risks**, HR formalized the **structured interview process** and **evidence collection procedures**:

- **Implemented a neutral, standardized interview process**, ensuring all parties were heard without bias.
- **Developed clear documentation protocols**, reducing legal exposure.
- **Partnered with external legal counsel for high-risk cases**, ensuring full labor law compliance.



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6

# SOLUTION

## Implementing a Structured Workplace Investigation Framework

### STEP 3 TRAINING & EQUIPPING HR AND MANAGERS:

HR recognized that **inconsistent case handling stemmed from a lack of training**. To prevent similar issues, they launched:

#### HR & Leadership Training:

- **HR professionals received compliance training** on workplace investigations.
- **A structured workplace investigation manual** was created to guide HR through case handling.

#### Manager Training on Early Intervention:

- **Trained managers on how to recognize and address inappropriate behavior** before escalation.
- **Implemented quarterly workshops** on preventing bias in performance evaluations and promotions.

### STEP 4: DRIVING ACCOUNTABILITY & RESOLUTION



To build **employee confidence in HR**, accountability mechanisms were put in place:

- **Launched a case tracking system**, ensuring investigations stayed within a **four-week resolution period**.
- **Improved reporting mechanisms**, increasing visibility into workplace trends and repeat misconduct.
- **Introduced non-retaliation policies**, ensuring employees felt safe coming forward.



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7



# IMPACT & RESULTS

## IMPACT

By implementing a **structured and legally compliant investigation framework**, the company saw:

### Resolution Time

**30%** reduction in investigation resolution time  
(from 6 weeks to 4 weeks)

**40%** increase in employee trust in HR's handling of workplace concerns (via engagement surveys)

### Employee Trust

### Manager Confidence

**25%** increase in manager confidence, leading to better early intervention in workplace concerns.

**50%** decrease in repeated misconduct cases, demonstrating effective case resolutions.

### Misconduct Cases

### Compliance Adherence

**100%** compliance with labor laws, reducing legal risk exposure.

## RESULTS

By developing a clear, **structured**, and **unbiased investigation framework**, the company successfully:

- **Strengthened workplace integrity**, ensuring all employees were treated fairly.
- **Reduced legal risks**, protecting the company from compliance violations and lawsuits.
- **Increased employee trust in HR**, reinforcing a culture of accountability.
- **Improved HR efficiency**, allowing faster, more consistent case resolutions.

This approach **transformed workplace investigations** into a **fair, efficient, and trusted process**—ensuring all concerns were handled **legally, consistently, and ethically**.



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8

# LESSONS LEARNED

## Standardization Builds Trust

A **clear and structured** investigation process eliminates **inconsistencies**, reducing perceptions of favoritism and reinforcing **employee confidence in HR**.

## Confidentiality is Key

Employees are more likely to report concerns when they **trust that their identities and information are protected**, preventing fear of retaliation.

## Timely Resolutions Prevent Escalation

Delays in investigations **increase workplace tensions and disengagement**. A defined **timeline and case tracking system** ensures **swift, fair resolutions**.

## Training Strengthens Accountability

Regular **HR and manager training** on **investigations, compliance, and bias awareness** equips teams to **handle concerns effectively** and foster a **culture of fairness**.

## Legal Alignment Reduces Risk

Partnering with **legal counsel** ensures **compliance with employment laws**, mitigating risks and protecting the organization from **liability and reputational damage**.

Implementing a **structured, transparent, and legally compliant** investigation framework **transforms workplace culture**, reinforcing **integrity, accountability, and trust** across the organization.



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9