



## ADVICE FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS AND DISSENTERS

If you witness wrongdoing or misconduct, **do not** assume that senior management is not aware of it and would act if they were. In many cases, they are either aware of the issue or (perversely) would rather not be. In either case, it is usually the messenger who suffers. Even if management does have good intentions, the imbalance in power is so great that caution is the best policy.

### Steps to take after witnessing wrongdoing or misconduct

1. Check your facts and make sure you are right about what you witnessed or learned. Even small errors will hurt your credibility.
2. Speaking out may be characterized as a personal grudge, so be completely sure that it isn't.
3. Don't be proud: get a second opinion.
  - a. Consult your conscience
  - b. Consult your family
  - c. Consult your union or professional association
  - d. Consult a lawyer
4. Find allies, if possible.
  - a. Colleagues
  - b. Unions and professional associations
  - c. Activist groups
  - d. Politicians
5. Gather evidence: document everything and store records in a safe place – not at work.
6. Create an understandable narrative:
  - a. Collect your documents and put the facts together
  - b. Create a clean, typed, well formatted package:
    - i. Start with a long narrative, preferably chronologically
    - ii. Summarize the story in a page, using bullet points as appropriate
    - iii. Boil it down to one paragraph – this is the hook for interested parties
    - iv. As much as possible, tie your story to the public interest
7. If you decide to proceed, pick the best way to blow the whistle.
  - a. Consider calling Crime Stoppers anonymously if you have witnessed criminal activity
  - b. Anonymous whistleblowing may not be possible if you've already raised the issue
  - c. Anonymity doesn't always work: sometimes they figure it out
  - d. Try to assess management's likely response, but remain cautious
  - e. Beware of hot lines (they often go straight back to the problem)
  - f. Consider your union or other group
  - g. Consult a lawyer

### General rules of thumb on self-preservation and conduct

1. If at all possible, **do not** go to meetings alone. Make notes and consider recording important conversations. This is where evidence of reprisals often surfaces.
2. Before you take any action, take time to find out where you can get confidential support and advice on what whistleblowing can or will involve if you do go forward. Others who have blown the whistle can share valuable lessons of their experiences.
3. Avoid isolation: find like-minded people
4. Know your rights.
5. Resist bitterness and the urge for revenge. These emotions cloud judgment.
6. Stay physically and emotionally healthy – exercise and keep connected with your family.
7. And, very importantly: know when to let go. Not every battle can be won.

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