

Lesson 16. Whistleblowing

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Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discover notable whistleblowers and assess how their whistleblowing initiative affected them.
2. Define what whistleblowing means.
3. Explain the origin of the terminology 'whistleblowing'.
4. Argue how society should perceive whistleblowers based on certain points of consideration.
5. Recognize the use of certain vocabularies from a recording using context clues.
6. Interpret and explain the content of infographics.
7. Explore the undertaking of an American scientist working in tobacco industry in disclosing classified company data.
8. Assess whether given scenarios should be reported by contemplating the aspects surrounding each situation.
9. Identify and correct the error found in each sentence.

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The Fate of The Whistleblowers

Click and watch the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xuiDuoRJkOY&t=17s>

Complete the table below

The whistleblowers	What was reported...	How the whistleblowing was carried out	Impacts on the whistleblower
• Daniel Ellsberg			
• Chelsea Manning			
• Edward Snowden			
• Thomas Drake			

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In a nutshell

The term **whistleblowing** means the act of drawing public attention, or the attention of an authority figure, to perceived wrongdoing, misconduct, unethical activity within public, private or third-sector organizations. Corruption, fraud, bullying, health and safety violation, cover-ups and discrimination are common activities highlighted by whistleblowers.

The term **whistleblower** (the person who carries out the act of whistleblowing) is said to have stemmed from the use of a whistle when alerting the public or a crowd about a bad situation, such as the commission of a crime or the breaking of rules during a game. The phrase whistle blower attached itself to law enforcement officials in the 19th century because they used a whistle to alert the public or fellow police.

However, its official origin in modern usage in the context of reporting wrongdoings/misconducts/crimes is reported to have been coined by U.S. civic activist Ralph Nader who put a positive spin on the term in the early 1970s to avoid the negative connotations found in other words such as "informer" and "snitch".

*“Keep blowing the whistle until people wake up from deep slumber”
– Narendra Kumar Acharya*

Interpret the symbolism written in the quote above.

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Debate: How should society perceive whistleblowers?

Points to consider:

- What's being reported
- Who's being reported
- What's the harm of the reported action/doing?
- Who can verify the legitimacy of the reported action/doing?
- What motivates a whistleblower?
- How the reported action/doing in question affects the mass/certain group of people/individuals (the object of the reported action)
- How the aftermath of the report will be

Sources:

<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/whistleblowers-in-business/>

<https://compliance.com/3-reasons-whistleblowing/>

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/hazards-whistleblowing-effects-workplace-15733.html>

<https://www.skillcast.com/blog/7-things-to-consider-before-you-blow-the-whistle>

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Keen Listening

Look for the following vocabulary in the recording. Define each vocabulary if you are familiar with it. While listening, jot down how each vocabulary is employed and related to the presented topic.

a show of hands

**coming forward in
the name of the
truth**

**fear of
retaliation**

perpetual job loss

uphill battle

**criminal
prosecution**

odds

**white-collar
felons**

tick

funneling

demotion

treasurer report

**embezzling
money**

enticed

**Identify what part of
speech each
vocabulary is.**

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Listening 16.1

Listen to the recording carefully and answer these questions below.

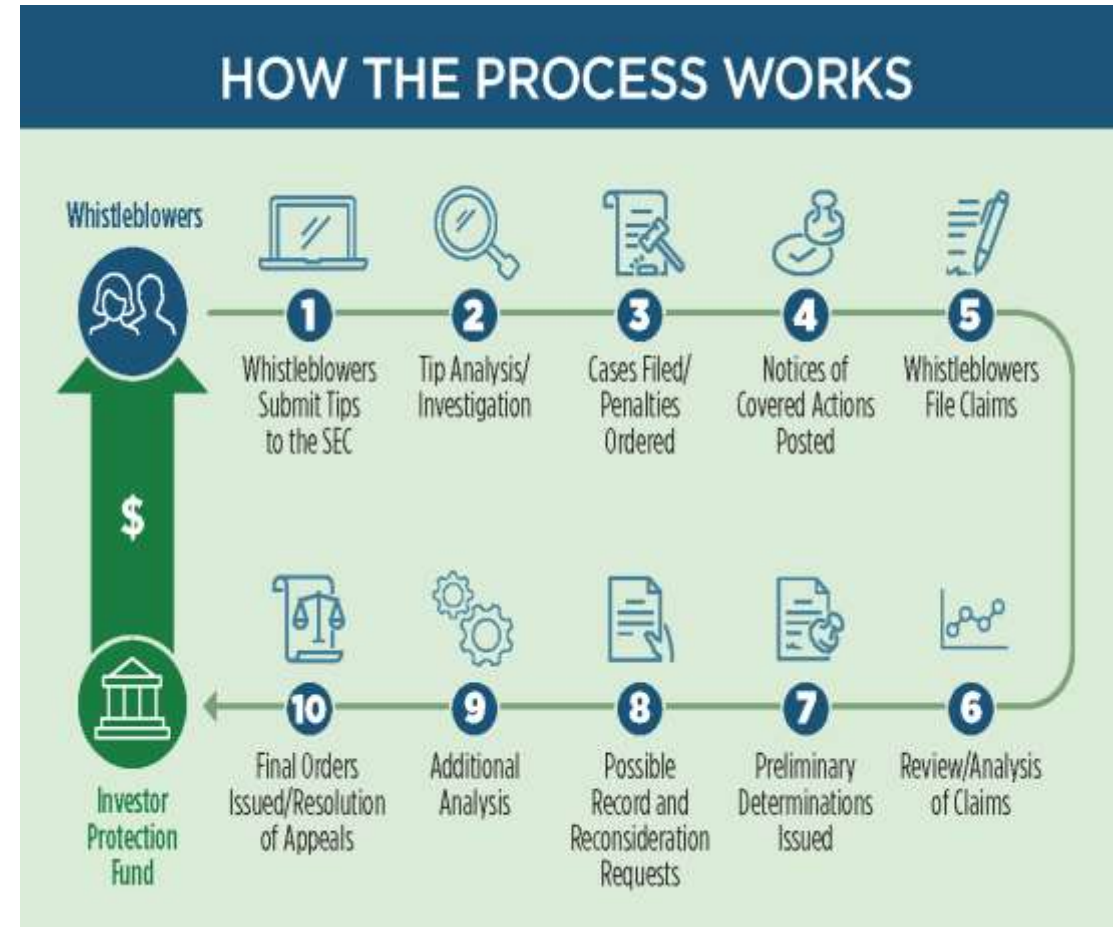
https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_richmond_pope_how_whistle_blowers_shape_history#t-101806

How Whistle-blowers Shape History

1. What kind of dilemmatic options explained by the speaker might one/an employee face should one encounter an act of wrongdoing/misconduct in the place where one works?
2. Name three examples of other historical fraud cases that were exposed by whistleblowers?
3. What are the other slang variations of the terminology 'whistleblowers'?
4. What kind of findings at the workplace triggered the whistleblower Mary Willingham's suspicion?
5. How did the speaker convince the audience that fame wasn't what the whistleblower Kathe Swanson sought when she blew the whistle on the suspicious account that she stumbled upon?
6. Did the whistleblowers contacting the speaker regretted their whistleblowing initiative/act? Support your answer.
7. How did Peter Buxtun's whistleblowing act positively affect today's American clinical trials?

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Study and discuss the graphs below.



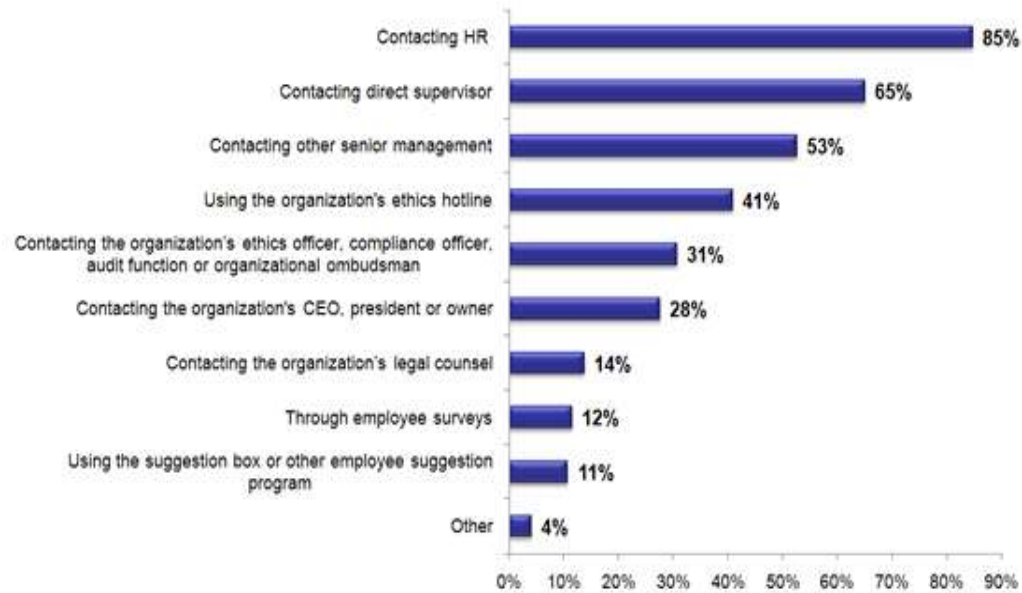
Reference: <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/insights/infographics/whistleblowing-facts-and-figures>

Reference: <https://www.sec.gov/page/whistleblower-100million>

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Study and discuss the graphs below.

What methods does your organization encourage employees to use when reporting unethical and/or illegal behavior in your organization?



Note: n = 361. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple response options. Excludes responses of "N/A, there are no specific methods that employees are encouraged to use to report unethical or illegal behavior."

Organizational Whistle-blowing - Reporting Unethical and Illegal Behavior in the Workplace | ©SHRM 2011

Reference: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/onlinebargraphs.aspx>



Reference: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/whistleblowers-an-early-detection-system.aspx>

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Jeffrey Wigand began working as a researcher at Brown & Williamson (B&W), an American tobacco company, in 1989. He and other scientists put forward the idea of developing a safer cigarette that would be less likely to cause cancer. His boss, however, told him to abandon the idea because a safer cigarette would **highlight** the harmful effects of other cigarettes. Wigand **bit his tongue** and gave up the project. He turned his attention to investigating the ingredients in his company's products and found harmful **additives** that were poisonous and highly addictive. He also **uncovered** documents that showed company executives knew the truth about these additives, despite having made public statements to the contrary. Wigand asked to have these additives removed from their products. He was **dismissed** shortly after in March 1993. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) began an investigation of the tobacco industry in 1994. They contacted Wigand, who agreed to talk with investigators. Afterwards, Wigand says he received two death threats at his home. He claims one **anonymous** telephone caller stated "Leave tobacco alone or else you'll find your kids hurt." Despite this, Wigand testified in the criminal investigation against the industry. He also participated in a TV interview in which he accused his former company of intentionally lying to the public and using chemicals to **boost** the effects of nicotine, an addictive chemical found in cigarettes.

In response, B&W launched a **smear campaign** against Wigand to **undermine** his **credibility** in the eyes of the public. They combed through Wigand's past to find lies that would make him appear untrustworthy. Their efforts were to no avail. Wigand's testimony helped forty-six American states win a **lawsuit** against the tobacco industry. The industry was forced to pay \$368 billion for the burden it had placed on the country's health care system.

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ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

1. Why did Wigand's boss tell him to cancel his project to make a safer cigarette?
2. **True** or **False**: Wigand was fired for giving private documents to the media.
3. How does Wigand claim he was threatened?
4. What measures did Jeffrey Wigand take to spread out his findings on substances in cigarettes?
5. What is a smear campaign? Who does Wigand claim started such a campaign? Why?
6. What was the result of the lawsuit?

- A. to make a formal statement about something, especially in a court of law.
- B. a planned attempt to harm the reputation of a person or company by telling lies about them.
- C. without any success or any effect.
- D. to gradually weaken or destroy someone or something.
- E. to remove someone from their job.
- F. to state an idea or opinion, or to suggest a plan or person, for other people to consider.
- G. the fact that someone can be believed or trusted.
- H. to search or examine systematically.
- I. saying or showing the opposite.
- J. to stop yourself from saying something that you would really like to say.

1. **put forward**
2. **bite your tongue**
3. **to the contrary**
4. **dismiss**
5. **testify**
6. **smear campaign**
7. **undermine**
8. **credibility**
9. **comb through**
10. **to no avail**

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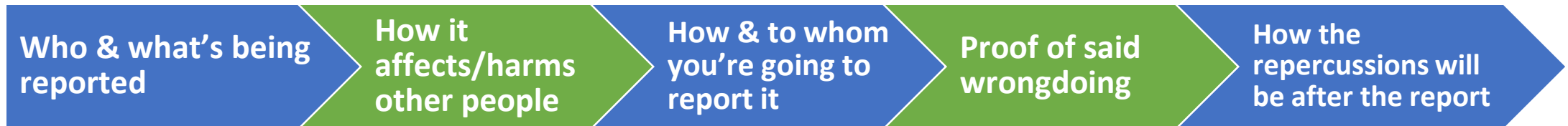
Would you blow the whistle?

Carefully examine these following scenarios and ponder whether you would blow the whistle or not

What would you do in these situations?

1. Your colleague called in sick and has been off work now for a week. Because of this you have to do her work as well as your own. Yesterday evening on TV you saw her sitting in the front row at a fashion event that was being reported live on the local news.
2. You see Diana stealing money from the till. It's not the first time you have seen her do this. Her husband has left her with three children and you know she doesn't have enough money for her oldest son's school skiing trip.
3. You told John about your idea for a new marketing campaign. He later presented your idea to your boss as his own idea. The campaign won an award and John received a cash prize for it. John is married to your boss's cousin.
4. Your neighbour sells his organic fruit and vegetables at the weekly market. You have seen him spray his fruit and veg with pesticides after hours. He gives half of his profit to the local hospice.

Assess each scenario by contemplating these following pointers:



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Identify the error in each sentence and correct it.

1. A fraud costs a company typical about 5% of its revenues and whistleblowing is the single most common method of fraud detection.
A B C D
2. 22% of those who reported wrongdoing said they experienced retaliation because their actions.
A B C D
3. 33% of individual who raised concerns about their workplace were later dismissed.
A B C D
4. One should consider remain confidential when deciding to blow the whistle.
A B C D
5. One must first comprehend that whistleblowing differs from conveying personal grievances.
A B C D
6. Someone who is dismissed for whistleblowing can bring a claim for unfair dismissed as long as they have met the protected disclosures criteria.
A B C D

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7. Every time a whistleblower is retaliated against, the public's rights are being trampled in too.
A B C D
8. Julian Assange is the figurehead of the whistleblowing website that exposed government secrets worldwide, notably the explosion leak of US military and diplomatic files.
A B
C D
9. The world's most famous whistleblower, Edward Snowden, says he has detected a softening in public hostility towards him in the US over his disclosing of top-secret government documents.
A B C
D
10. Police in China's virus epicenter Wuhan acted "inappropriately" by punishing a doctor who blew the whistle on the outbreak that had now killed more than 9,000 worldwide.
A B C
D
11. The positive effects of whistleblowing typically initiate compliance and screening standards which weren't present before, resulting in a better ran organization.
A B C
D

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Express Yourself

1. Have you ever witnessed a wrongdoing/misconduct directly?
 - If yes, did you then decide to blow the whistle on that wrongdoing?
 - If not, what stopped you from reporting said wrongdoing/misconduct?
2. From your perspective, are people actually obliged to report a case of any wrongdoing/offence? If yes, in what way are we obliged to report those instances?
3. How do you now find whistleblowers having completed the lesson?
4. Were there ever any phenomenal whistleblowing cases in your country/that you know of? Describe how phenomenal it was.
5. Do you consider whistleblowers 'hero' or 'traitor'?
6. Should the law protect whistleblowers?
7. Should the motives of a whistleblower be examined?
8. Do you think whistleblowers are good for a country?
9. WIKILEAKS: Wikileaks publishes private information, often obtained from whistleblowers, to the public. Do you support Wikileaks?
10. Would you say that Wikileaks is doing the right thing? Support your argument.
11. What if there were a person deciding to leak classified government documents of your country. The whistleblower claimed that it should be done because it concerns the safety of many people. Would you be for that action? Or would you be against it? Provide reasons.

THE END