Safeguarding all interests
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by Ng Jing Yng jingyng@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE - Report a misconduct and risk losing your job, feign ignorance and allow your conscience to be pricked - these are common dilemmas employees face when they come to know of unethical behaviour among their colleagues.

Without a confidential feedback channel, workers may turn to the media and the company may incur huge financial and reputation losses from the bad publicity generated.

To solve this problem, a whistle-blowing hotline was launched yesterday by Singapore firm Q2 Consulting Partner and United States’ Global Compliance for employees to file allegations against their own company.

They can either choose to disclose the content anonymously or non-anonymously and investigations will then be made to verify the case.

According to a Global Compliance spokesperson, 40 Singapore firms have already signed up for this service.

Businesses providing whistle-blowing services have become more popular since 2006 after the slew of corporate and charity scandals in Singapore.

Local auditing firms such as Deloitte Singapore said more companies are taking up whistle-blowing services whereby staff can feedback through hotlines, emails and SMSes.

Similarly, employees can choose to remain anonymous.

According to Associate Professor Mak Yuen Teen, co-director of Corporate Governance and Financial Reporting Centre at the National University of Singapore, annual reports show that 60 per cent of listed companies here have whistle-blowing practices either done internally within their own organisations or through an external third party.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), too, are increasingly under pressure to adopt such practices to enhance their public image and stay accountable to their business partners.

Assoc Prof Mak believes that such a hotline will work in Singapore as employees are most concern about their careers, and this external avenue will protect their identities and allow them to be more forthcoming with their sentiments.

Besides being an avenue for employees to give early feedback and stave off financial losses, whistle-blowing tools are put in place to nip misconduct in the bud and safeguard shareholders' interests, according to organisations interviewed by MediaCorp.

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) is one organisation that has engaged an external auditing partner for its whistle-blowing policies since 2006. NKF chairman Gerard Ee said that implementing whistle-blowing practices will demonstrate to shareholders that the organisation is serious about corporate governance and send the right message to the public.

"However, at the end of the day, for any whistle-blowing scheme to work, it still boils down to individual conviction to stand up for the truth," he said.