Whistle blowers reports an increase in calls

SOUTH African based international whistle blowing service provider, Whistle Blowers, is bucking trends – while crime surveys indicate a general decrease in the use of external hot lines, the average number of calls received by Whistle Blowers clients has increased over the last 18 months.

Dale Horne (pictured), Operations Director of Whistle Blowers, said that the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) Global Economic Crime Survey which is published every two years shows just how crucial it is to provide both employers and employees with a trustworthy and effective means of identifying and reporting commercial crime. The 2014 survey indicated that economic crime remained a serious challenge to business leaders, government officials and private individuals in South Africa with 69 percent experiencing some form of economic crime in the last 24 months. It also showed one of the most disturbing increases in this sort of crime in South Africa since 2009.

Horne understands the finding that whistle blowing may be under threat in South Africa with a suggested steady decline in the effectiveness of whistle blowing systems and internal tip off systems. The survey also indicated that there was a definite indication that senior management was committing more fraud and that employees were possibly less willing to blow the whistle if the fraudster was more senior than they were.

He said that, in his own organisation’s experience, it did not seem that there was an increase in the number of senior managers committing crimes. However, where senior management was involved, the value of crimes appeared to be higher. An employee would naturally be afraid to report the boss. But this fear will no longer be there if they are comfortable that the external service provider will protect their identity and they can get trustworthy assistance. A potential whistle blower will take the brave step of making the call a lot easier if he knew and trusted the process prior to making the call.

“We promote internal reporting where an employee feels comfortable reporting an alleged crime no matter how serious it is. Employees need to have the peace of mind and trust that should they wish to remain anonymous, their identity will be protected at all costs. They need to know that all reports will be dealt with professionally and that they don’t need to feel uncomfortable or fear intimidation or reprisal.”

Horne said that Whistle Blowers received a large number of calls varying from minor incidents to large scale fraud and corruption with no particular crime more prevalent.

He added that there was no particular category of individual or employee who was most likely to report a crime. “In our experience, a whistle blower is an employee who is honest and doesn’t agree with irregularities that are taking place in his or her company. A whistle blower can also be a third party who is affected by the irregularities, such as a contractor or even a family member of an employee. The third category of whistle blower is the grudge caller - a syndicate member that has been short changed, a disgruntled employee, supplier or contractor. Often this type of call exposes serious irregularities - however caution is always taken when receiving this information and information is always thoroughly investigated,” he said.

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