

6 Credibility Assessment Strategies for Workplace Investigations

A thorough investigator has the responsibility to analyze the facts as uncovered, assess the credibility of the parties involved and come to some reasonable determination – even in a “he said, she said” situation.



*“He Said, She Said,”
Now What?”*

ASSESS THE BELIEVABILITY OF INDIRECT PARTIES

- » Ask who the parties told about the situation.
- » Question why the parties chose or didn't choose to tell someone about the incident.
 - » If someone else was told, ask when and what was said.
- » Determine whether human resources (HR) or a manager was made aware of any performance concerns.
 - » If HR was informed, ask when they were told and what was said.
- » Evaluate what the relationship is between the indirect party and the persons directly involved.

EVALUATE THE LOGIC OF EACH PARTY'S STORY

- » Ask yourself, does what the person is telling me make sense.
- » Compare the person's explanation to the timeline of events.
 - » Consider the feasibility of the person's account.
- » Evaluate the logic of the person's actions relative to the story.

UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY TO CORROBORATE IMPORTANT INVESTIGATION INFORMATION

- » Check and probe for emails, text messages and other computer records that might support one party's statement.
- » If any are uncovered, evaluate whether the tone of the communications between the parties changed at any time.
- » Decide whether the emails related to performance of the involved party were similar or different than those sent to other team members.
 - » Analyze whether the frequency of emails increased or decreased.
- » Document receipts, log in/log out audits, phone records, or internet history that corroborate a version of events.

CREATE A TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- » Ask both parties for a specific chronology of events.
- » Determine when the offending behavior began and whether it has stopped.
- » Ask at what points, if any, feedback was provided.
- » Review the timing of the complaint versus when the offending behavior began.
- » Establish exactly what is in conflict and how you can corroborate it.

CORROBORATE WHAT DID OR DIDN'T HAPPEN

- » Request any performance-related documentation.
- » Determine how any documentation provided fits into the timeline of events.
- » Evaluate how any relevant performance assessments are similar or different from other evaluations for the team.
- » If there is no documentation regarding changes in employee performance, ask why.

LOOK FOR CONSISTENCY OR CONTRADICTION OF THE FACTS

- » Determine whether the person can provide specific details about the events (e.g., How often? When were remarks made? What was the tone used?).
 - » Evaluate the person's response.
- » Ask where the issue took place and get specific: Where were you standing? Where was she standing? What did you do when you left?
 - » If one of the parties denies the allegations, ask if (s)he can provide information that would support that it never happened.
 - » If applicable, ask if (s)he can provide evidence that it did happen? (e.g., calendar, meeting notes).
 - » Assess whether the person is being evasive or helpful and direct.
 - » Consider the consistency of responses versus contradiction of facts.