

SEXUAL HARASSMENT STILL PROMINENT IN WORKPLACE



Sexual harassment in the workplace seemed to be on the backburner over the past decade or so, until Herman Cain and his scandal hit the media in recent weeks. Out of sight for sexual harassment at work does not necessarily mean out of mind. The number of sexual harassment complaints filed by employees continues to drop but two-thirds of United States citizens continue to feel that sexual harassment is still a problem in the office. The more disturbing number is that one in four women involved in the survey reported being sexually harassed at least once while at work. "Millennials, who have grown up with the Internet, are finding they need to conform their humor and language quite a bit when they enter a mixed-age workplace," said Fran Sepler. Sepler is a Twin Cities trainer for corporations who investigates at least 50 cases of sexual harassment each year. "Their attitude is, why can't we all just be held accountable for our actions?" Robert Weber said. Weber is the co-founder and senior vice president of W3i, a network for application developers in St. Cloud. "Our more experienced workers know it's something every company has to do." Plenty of Weber's employees say that sexual harassment is a very serious problem but find the video on it a waste of time. Most of the employees do not spend enough time thinking about the video because they understand their rights. "It's not on our minds, but we're aware of what it is and what the consequences are," said Julie Karkela. Sepler says that the biggest change has been with the advent of technology rather than people themselves causing problems with sexual harassment. Text messages and e-mails have made it easier for human resources personnel to investigate a case that can turn into 'he said, she said.' "There's a prevalence of sexually explicit, offensive or pornographic images being sent around as e-mail attachments by people who assume they will be welcome. When someone gets offended, the sender is taken aback. More often than not, there's a trail of e-mails and texts," she said. The numbers for sexual harassment complaints have decreased over the past couple of years for the country as a whole, and this is due in large part to less harassment actually occurring in the workplace. Businesses have also become more effective when it comes to being able to handle the complaints. Employees have also figured out how to deal with colleague-to-colleague harassment on their own. "Employers are getting better at responding promptly so they don't turn into legal claims," Sepler said. "People are waiting longer to complain in this economy, or not complaining at all, because they don't want to risk the possibility they'll have to find a new job."

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