

Sex, Power & The Workplace: Protecting Women Who Work

March 1, 2018 | [Workplace Culture And Conduct](#), [Labor And Employment](#)



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With the Oscars in the spotlight this weekend, the lens of the #MeToo movement is re-focusing on Hollywood and the entertainment industry. But, the challenges of sexual harassment transcend industry and geography. Even Oprah, in accepting her recent Golden Globes award, powerfully reminded us about victims beyond Hollywood: those who “had children to feed and bills to pay and dreams to pursue.” Fundamentally, it is about those who *work*, at all levels, and it is incumbent on employers, legally, ethically, practically, to maintain a work environment that fosters respect and productivity. I recently was quoted in an article in SHRM’s national magazine that highlights the risks for [vulnerable workers](#).

Coordinating efforts among HR, safety, and operations can reduce the likelihood that a worker will be isolated, unprotected, or susceptible to the misdeeds of others. For example, a plant manager might consider an unannounced visit to the second and third shifts. Or a company might upgrade lighting, surveillance cameras, and security in areas where employees may be working alone, such as corners of warehouses, customer counters, or in parking lots. And, of course, updating or confirming a reporting system that encourages people to speak up in the face of misconduct is critical to an effective anti-harassment culture. For as many workplaces, there are multiple solutions— and taking an approach that values employees’ and their contributions are more likely to be effective. Not to diminish the high-profile stories of Hollywood, but let’s not let the Silver Screen drama dilute the challenges of those fighting smaller battles every day.

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