



# hr2go

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## If you think HR professionals are easy to scare – think again!

In this Halloween special edition newsletter, I'm talking about real-life HR horror stories that have happened over my 20-year career. Get ready for a fright!

### HR horror story number 1

A funny smell in the office on this Halloween's Eve? Probably one of the most awkward conversations you can have with someone but what do you do when a member of staff's personal hygiene is offending their colleagues?

It's a good idea to keep things informal in cases like this and make sure the concerns raised are coming from the right place, not to be deemed as bullying or harassment, and there aren't any underlying health conditions that could be causing someone to smell. HR can support the line manager to raise concerns with the person involved.

A good approach is to remind employees that personal hygiene can be part of a dress code and if there are no reasonable grounds

for not following them, this could be treated as failure to follow a reasonable management instruction.

### HR horror story number 2

Watch out, an imposter is about! What can you do if an employee is found to have lied about their experience and capability?

If you discover that a phoney is in your workforce, you can follow the capability process to fairly discipline or dismiss them. If the employee has been employed for less than two years, you may be able to speed up normal proceedings. Always make sure to check your contract or any short service clause beforehand.

Review your shortlisting and selection methods and how you obtain references from previous employers.

### HR horror story number 3

An employee sharing inappropriate or sexual content on work accounts. A horror story that will send shivers down any employer's spine!

There are two main concerns here; firstly, whoever sent the inappropriate image/content should be disciplined following a full investigation, but the employer also needs to consider the fact that the person on the receiving end may not have wanted it!

If this is the case, there is potential for them to claim sexual harassment. Be prepared for this outcome and put measures in place to ensure that they feel supported by you as their employer during this time.

Review your policies on sexual harassment ensuring that it is clear on how employees can raise concerns if they feel they are being bullied or harassed. Also look at your policies which are there to protect the business such as Data Protection and Use of email, internet and social media.



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### HR horror story number 4

An absolute nightmare for any business! An employee who uses significant amounts of work time to complete personal side hustles whilst using the company's CRM data.

Unless this is something that has been agreed in advance, disciplinary procedures will apply.

Before going down that route, however, it's important to ensure that the employer has clear evidence that the employee isn't fulfilling their professional responsibilities so a full investigation will need to take place. This will help you avoid the potential nightmare of a tribunal claim.

Review any policies you have on second jobs and make it really clear in the contract of employment if you prohibit employees from taking a second job. Don't forget to check your confidentiality clause too!



You can also request an initial free 30-minute consultation to see if I can help you.

hr2go Consultancy is here to support you with any of your HR issues or concerns.

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### HR horror story number 5

Topping the list of hair-raising horror stories, it has to be a Christmas party drunken brawl! When a love triangle became the focus of the dance floor a usually rational employee was overtaken with emotion due to a large quantity of alcohol and the green-eyed monster!

Employers need to remember that violent or aggressive behaviour is classed as gross misconduct, and they can fairly dismiss employees who act in this way. Employers must carry out a full and fair disciplinary process before taking any action, however. This includes conducting a full investigation, listening to everyone involved and taking witness statements. Reasonable explanations should be taken into consideration. If there are none, then you can proceed with appropriate disciplinary action.

In addition to this review your policies on relationships at work and work-related social events where employees are drinking alcohol.



# Questions of conflict tackled!



## How can managers have less stressful conversations with staff members?

Workplace conflict can cause significant anxiety, but difficult conversations can be managed in ways that minimise stress for all involved. With Stress Awareness Week this week it's useful to reflect on the causes and consequences of stress, and to think about how to better manage it. A significant stress factor relates to unresolved conflict, in and out of work. Managers shouldn't shy away from conflict and employers should encourage line managers to build up their courage, skills and confidence to constructively address it. When left unaddressed, conflict can raise stress and anxiety levels, and decrease engagement, productivity, and overall wellbeing.

Managers should have the ability to show empathy and view a conflict from a perspective different to their own. They should try to understand what others might be going through, and which of their needs are not being met. Listen to employees and hear what is going on for them. Try to understand the triggers that may be fuelling a conflict. This can lead to increased understanding which, in itself can help to resolve conflict.

## How can employers support their workforce during the conflict in Israel and Gaza?

The escalating conflict in Israel and Gaza is deeply unsettling and will affect not only people within the region but globally as well. Employers will want to support employees who may have family and friends living there and who will be extremely concerned about their safety. The widely reported loss of life and ongoing trauma, and the divisive nature of the conflict can trigger stress and anxiety for many people and tension in the workplace.

Employers have an important role in supporting employees affected on any level and to make sure any tension or differences in opinion do not spill into conflict in the workplace. Employees with family and friends in the area will be extremely concerned for their health and safety. Employers should recognise that they will likely want to keep in regular contact with their family and friends and may wish to make or accept personal phone calls during working time. Employers can give support for example, by allowing staff to move their lunch breaks, to adjust their working hours or have more frequent breaks for that purpose.

Employers should also try to accommodate requests for other types of flexibility such as shift swaps, flexi-time or reduced hours working, and to be aware that employees may be in distress. Some may need emergency time off to deal with an immediate family crisis. There needs to be clear communication from employers to all line managers and staff that it recognises the uncertainty, stress and anxiety many people will be feeling and the flexibility and support that's available.

As well as recognising potential risks of conflict between staff, employers should also understand the wider impact the conflict may have on people's health and wellbeing. Coverage in the media on the tragedies affecting those involved in the conflict could trigger anxiety and stress, which may affect employees' wellbeing and resilience. Employers can encourage basic self-care and caution employees from constantly watching the news. Employers should also focus on the key areas of HR and people management that support wellbeing at work. This means ensuring line managers understand their responsibilities in managing people effectively and supporting their wellbeing by listening and demonstrating empathy and providing flexibility and support where this is needed.

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