Handling Employee Complaints:
What Every Manager Needs To Know

Why you play a critical role

- In most cases, HR will handle employee complaint investigations
- But YOU will be the first to hear about complaints from employees
- Handle those initial conversations correctly and you greatly reduce the risk of lawsuits

The worst mistakes managers make

- Failing to really listen to the complaining employee – and offering your opinion on how the employee should deal with it
- Agreeing to NOT take action when employees say something like, “Please don’t get anyone in trouble over this.”
- Assuming the guilt or innocence of parties involved in the complaint

A 3-step model for conducting complaint interviews

- **Step 1: Clarify** – Ask, “What exactly happened?” Dig for specifics and don’t stop until you really understand
- **Step 2: Listen** – Be non-judgmental and avoid comments that convey emotion. Don’t agree, don’t argue, don’t react ... just gather the facts
- **Step 3: Document** – Write down everything you’re told but don’t note your feelings or opinions – such comments could work against you in court

Wrapping things up

- Thank the employee for reporting the problem
- Draft a report detailing the facts
- Take the report to HR and let them take over the investigation