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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Reckoning: 2017 & Sexual Misconduct

71 PERCENT OF MISCONDUCT OCCURRED IN THE WORKPLACE; 26 PERCENT REPORTED TO HR

CHICAGO, January 2, 2018 – At the close of 2017, many who were subject to sexual harassment and/or assault have been empowered by the #MeToo movement to name their abusers. This has had a powerful impact not only culturally, but also in the workplace, where 71 percent of this alleged abuse occurred, according to a new analysis of news reports of sexual misconduct conducted by global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Just over a quarter (25.7 percent) of alleged sexual misconduct that occurred in the workplace was reported to the company.

“HR is the first line of defense in many of these situations. When companies lack an effective system of reporting such behavior, the whole organization suffers,” said Andrew Challenger, Vice President of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

“However, the important shift that came about after the #MeToo movement and the Weinstein scandal is being reflected in the way companies are reexamining and changing their sexual harassment policies,” added Challenger.

After Matt Lauer's high-profile departure from the TODAY Show, NBC announced it was tightening its policy, including rules that mandate workers report any sexual harassment they see. Moreover, Microsoft recently changed its sexual harassment policy to eliminate forced arbitration, a process that requires issues of sexual harassment to be settled outside of the courtroom, prohibiting employees from discussing these cases.

"The time is now for HR departments and company management to scrutinize their policies and enact real, cultural change in their organizations. Sexual misconduct is on the forefront of employees' minds, especially as they watch powerful people being held accountable for their actions," said Challenger.

Of the 98 cases Challenger tracked since October, 99 percent of the alleged abusers were men.

Thirty-three people have resigned or retired from their positions due to the allegations, while 25 have been fired. Eight have been suspended from their jobs or taken a leave of absence. Five were removed from the projects on which they were working, all in the media or entertainment businesses.

In fact, most (42.9 percent) of the allegations were made in the entertainment industry, resulting in 23 resignations/firings and six suspensions. Ten others have faced some sort of backlash, but have not lost work or been fired from projects as of this writing.

Another 21.6 percent of accused persons came from the government sector, resulting in 11 resignations, one retirement, and one lost election. Two candidates will not seek re-election, and one campaign was suspended.

Another 12.4 percent of allegations were made in the news media, while 9.3 percent were in print media. These industries saw 11 firings, seven resignations, and at least one dropped project due to the allegations.

In all, of the alleged targets of the abuse, Over 70 percent were co-workers or subordinates of the accused. Nearly 24 percent worked with the accused tangentially, such as a client or consultant, or did not work with the person at all.

"We've reached a tipping point in terms of sexual harassment, and the workplace is the scene of the majority of these crimes. Companies must address employee concerns by working toward creating a safe environment for their workers," said Challenger.

"This will not only benefit employees. Fostering an environment that stymies bullying and harassment will ultimately lead to better productivity, more creative problem-solving, and innovative thinking. A strong anti-harassment policy and a culture that fits that paradigm will ultimately attract the best talent," added Challenger.

One crucial way to build a better environment is to develop and clearly communicate the sexual harassment policy, and communicate it often to reinforce its importance. It should include a clear process for filing a complaint, and offer alternatives to employees when the person to whom they are supposed to report the complaint is the abuser. This will go a long way in building trust among the workforce.

“Another key is transparency. Employees need to feel like they are being listened to, and that their leaders are held to the same high standards they are. This does not necessarily mean companies have to tell the public when they have sexual harassment issues, but it should be clear to employees that allegations will be investigated quickly and abusers removed immediately,” said Challenger.

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Challenger Sexual Misconduct Analysis

Industry

Entertainment	42
Government	21
News Media	12
Print Media	9
Art	6
Restaurants	4
Business	2
Sports	1
Technology	1

Complaints Were Reported to HR/Company	25.7%
Accused Made Public Statement	64.3%

Alleged Abuser's Response

Denies Allegations	39.8%
Neither Confirms nor Denies	24.5%
Confirms Allegations	19.4%
Confirms Some/Denies Some	8.2%
Claims Misunderstanding	6.1%

Location

Occurred in Workplace	71.4%
Occurred Elsewhere	35.7%

Who Is Making Accusations

Co-Worker	32.7%
Subordinate	37.8%
Customer/Client/Outside Party	23.5%
Minor	10.2%

Outcome

Resigned	32
Fired	25
Backlash	11
Suspended	8
Cancelled Project	5
None Yet Reported	5
Will Not Seek Re-Election	2
Elected President	1
Jail	1
Lawsuit	1
Leave of Absence	1
Lost Election	1
May be Fired From Show	1
Retired	1
Sanctioned	1
Selling Stake in Magazine	1
Campaign Suspended	1

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. ©