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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **UPDATE: The State of Office Relationships Post #MeToo** **MORE THAN HALF OF COMPANIES HAVE** **REVIEWED HARASSMENT POLICIES**

**CHICAGO, July 10, 2018** – The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have empowered survivors of sexual harassment and assault to name their abusers, who were often in a position of power over them professionally. In the wake of this phenomenon, more companies are reviewing their policies on sexual harassment and taking a harder line on workplace romance, according to an update to a survey conducted by global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. in January.

The new survey found that over 52 percent of companies reviewed their sexual harassment policies since the beginning of the #MeToo movement, which effectively began last October. This is compared to 34 percent who said they reviewed their policies in January. Forty-two percent of companies reported that they are comfortable with their policies in June compared to 63 percent who claimed this in January. Another 2 percent reported they created new policies in June, while no companies reported this in January.

“Companies are responding to the cultural movement and recognizing that most of this abuse occurred in the workplace. Calls to make the office a safer place and free from any kind of abuse were overwhelming, and seeing companies respond is heartening” said Andrew Challenger, Vice President of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Of the companies that reviewed their policies, 58 percent updated them, compared to 25 percent who did the same in January.

“Employers reported adding and clarifying reporting avenues and instituting ‘zero tolerance’ and anti-bullying policies when it comes to workplace harassment,” added Challenger.

The survey was conducted among 150 HR executives in June. The respondents were from companies of various sizes and industries nationwide.

The new survey asked respondents if they observed any changes in the behavior of their staff in light of these movements. Nearly 55 percent saw no demonstrable change in behavior, 14 percent observed a more respectful atmosphere, and 2 percent reported more women were asking for raises and promotions.

Nearly 17 percent of employers saw an increase in complaints of inappropriate behavior. Over 7 percent reported that men were more cautious in their interactions with their female colleagues, while just over 2 percent said they observed that women were more cautious.

“It is not surprising that companies are seeing more people come forward in the wake of #MeToo, as workers feel supported and empowered to do so. Likewise, it makes sense that there would be some caution when it comes to interactions at work in order to keep from crossing any lines,” said Challenger.

“However, it is imperative that employers create an environment where this cautious approach to employee interaction does not keep women from having a seat at the table or otherwise compromise the advancement of worthy workers,” he added.

The survey also found that slightly more companies have formal or informal office romance policies than reported in January. While slightly fewer companies report a formal, written policy (57 percent in January compared to 51 percent in June), nearly 9 percent report they give managers discretion to handle relationships, compared to 3 percent in January. Just under 5 percent of employers are currently working on an office romance policy compared to no companies reporting this at the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, nearly a quarter of employers require all relationships be disclosed to the company, compared to 17 percent who required this in January. More companies discourage dating between a subordinate and a manager: 78 percent in June versus 70 percent in January. Twenty-seven percent of companies are taking relationships on a case-by-case basis, fewer than the 33 percent who reported this policy in January.

“Fewer companies want to take office romances on a case-by-case basis, suggesting employers want to get ahead of potential problems by creating an overarching policy. By prohibiting relationships between managers and subordinates, companies can minimize the power dynamics that could lead to the abuse of a manager’s position,” said Challenger.

“That said, the answer does not lie in banning office romances altogether. Many strong relationships have been built in the workplace. Attempting to forbid office relationships will only keep those who do begin dating from taking appropriate avenues to ensure professionalism,” he added.

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# Challenger #MeToo in the Workplace Survey Results

**Have you reevaluated or created your company's sexual harassment policy in light of the recent #MeToo movement?**

	January	June
No, we are comfortable with our current policy.	62.86%	41.67%
Yes, we have reviewed our current policy.	34.28%	52.08%
No, we do not have a policy.	2.86%	4.17%
Yes, we created a policy.	0.00%	2.08%
No, but we are working on one.	0.00%	0.00%
Other (please specify).	0.00%	0.00%

**If yes, did you update your policy?**

	January	June
Yes.	25.00%	58.33%
No.	75.00%	41.67%

**Do you have a policy on romantic relationships at work?**

	January	June
Yes, we have a formal, written policy that is reviewed with all employees.	56.66%	51.11%
No, we do not have a formal or informal policy.	26.67%	28.89%
No, but we let employees know that it is frowned upon.	10.00%	4.44%
Yes, managers handle romantic relationships within their own departments.	3.33%	8.89%
We do not care if our employees engage in romantic relationships.	3.33%	1.99%
No, but we are currently working on one.	0.00%	4.68%

**Which are true of your office dating policy? Select all that apply.**

	January	June
We do not allow relationships between a manager and a direct report.	70.00%	77.78%
We discourage manager/subordinate and inter-department relationships, but do not interfere with cross-department relationships or those that are among employees on equal levels.	46.67%	51.11%
We take relationships on a case-by-case basis.	33.33%	26.67%
All relationships must be reported to the company.	16.67%	24.44%
We do not interfere with any relationships in the office unless a problem occurs.	10.00%	15.56%
We allow any relationship as long as it is reported to the company.	6.67%	13.33%
Other (please specify).	3.33%	0.00%

**Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.**

**NEW: In the wake of these movements, have you observed any differences in behavior between male and female colleagues? Please select all that apply.**

We have observed no difference in behavior.	54.76%
We have seen an increase in complaints about inappropriate behavior.	16.67%
We have observed a more respectful atmosphere at work.	14.29%
Men are more cautious about interactions with women at work.	7.14%
We have seen a decrease in complaints about inappropriate behavior.	4.76%
More women are asking for raises/promotions.	2.38%
Women are more cautious about interactions with men at work.	2.38%

**Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.**