

Reducing Employee Conflict

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David Barron was quoted in *SHRM* discussing practical ways to handle employee conflict. There are different forms of employee conflicts and having protocols for handling them are essential.

"Addressing anonymous complaints that don't contain specifics, such as the date and time of an alleged incident and the identities of the person or people involved, can be challenging. However, if the department is identified, it's worth talking to the manager," said David. "When dealing with discrimination-related complaints lodged by employees in protected classes, company leaders should guard against retaliation. Federal law protects individuals against retaliation when they allege discrimination in the workplace, regardless of the validity or reasonableness of the complaint—and retaliation charges are harder for employers to defend against. It's important for a company's leaders to create a nonretaliation policy and communicate it to everyone involved in an investigation, including witnesses and supervisors," he said. A supervisor facing discrimination allegations from an employee might avoid the employee who complained. This action could result in accusations of retaliation. David warned that the employee might say, " 'People won't talk to me anymore. They don't invite me to lunch anymore. I was not in this meeting. I wasn't aware of promotional opportunities.' So it's a slippery slope."

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