

## Inappropriate - At Any Level

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Thanks to years of training seminars, smaller group sessions and one-to-one conversations conducted by Human Resource managers and consultants, gone forever are the days when one could claim with a straight face that he or she did not know where innocent conversation ended and inappropriate action began. Sexual harassment still exists in the workplace; however, today it can assume more subtle forms. Often, comments are made that have double meanings so that the speaker falls back on the non-offensive interpretation. The end result is that HR professionals have to conduct thorough investigations in order to ensure that they get the true story. It is not uncommon for investigators to find out about far more than the alleged sexual harassment.

Nothing exemplifies the need for a thorough HR investigation more than the recent resignation of Hewlett-Packard CEO Mark Hurd. In June of this year, a female contractor for HP contacted the company's board of directors with allegations that Hurd sexually harassed her. The board ordered an investigation into the specific allegations. While all of the specifics have not been disclosed, we know the board, based on the investigation, determined that Hurd showed poor judgment which they felt impaired his ability to effectively lead HP. Although the board concluded that his conduct did not amount to sexual harassment, it still concluded that Hurd should resign immediately and a search for a permanent replacement should begin immediately.

Hurd's example is a reminder to HR professionals that they need to review all of the facts before reaching a conclusion. HR professionals need to stay the course and conduct a thorough investigation, since, as was the case of Hurd at HP, you are likely to find out more than you bargained for.

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### ***Related People***





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