



Only elevate issues when certain

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: It was brought to my attention by a fellow work associate that two other people in the organization were making fun of the way I walk. (I walk with a limp due to back problems.) I felt a little insulted about it and spoke with my supervisor. However, while discussing the matter with my supervisor, I changed my mind about it being further addressed and requested that she (my supervisor) disregard the issue. (She agreed to disregard it.) A few days later I learned that my supervisor did, in fact, address the matter with other supervisors. I don't know why she did this after telling me she wouldn't. I am at a loss now as to whether I can trust my supervisor when discussing personal or private matters in the future.

BETRAYED SUBORDINATE



DEAR BETRAYED SUBORDINATE: I understand your feeling of betrayal. Ideally, you always want to be able to trust your supervisor when discussing personal or private matters. However, when you bring matters to your supervisor's attention that could be considered ethics violations or

deviations from the organization's standards of behavior or culture, she is obligated to address and/or correct the behavior or matter at hand. I don't know why your supervisor addressed your issue with such specificity, (especially since she agreed to not say anything pertaining to your scenario), rather, she should have addressed it in general terms with everyone to protect your identity as well as reinforce company policies and expectations and/or to get the attention of people acting in substandard ways.

In the future, if you don't want incidents of this nature to be addressed beyond your scope of control, then don't discuss them with your boss. You put her in an extremely awkward position by shining some light on a behavioral problem and then expecting her to not do anything to rectify the matter. You're basically asking her to be negligent in her supervisory responsibilities. Don't do this. Be more certain of your desired outcome before you decide to communicate such an issue with your boss.

You also could address the issue directly with those acting immature. There's nothing wrong with this type of confrontation as long as the offender is not disgruntled or angry and you do it

calmly, with a sense of professionalism. Sometimes you have to just quickly make a point without acting like the incident offended you. When confronted in a timely manner, people will usually be a little surprised and not have much to say on the spot. Regardless how they feel about it later, you will have gotten their attention and they will reflect on their behavior.

Lastly, you can simply ignore their behavior (unless it's committed in front of you). Sometimes you simply don't have time for such nonsense. After all, other than the clown or two they're entertaining with their childish behavior, everyone else will not think too fondly of them.

The more you conduct yourself like a true professional, the more people will respect you regardless of what a few bad apples might say about you or how they act behind your back.



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.