An Interactive Video on Whistle-Blowing

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Abstract

When you believe that there is a wrongdoing in your workplace, you may choose to inform a relevant authority (internally or externally), and the act of doing so is known as whistle-blowing.
There are several different ways in which you can choose to handle the situation, depending on how you do so could affect whether or not you lose your job.
By closely inspecting the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and other Internet sources including IEEE journals, we were able to determine some of the nuances surrounding whistle-blowing. Using what we learnt, we were able to create a learning resource, as an interactive video on YouTube. An advantage of this resource type is that it should engage the viewer more than a resource type such as a written document or set of slides.
The resource explains several key issues. To be protected, you must ensure that the information you disclose both qualifies as a qualifying disclosure under the act and is serious enough. You should proceed initially through internal channels, and you should consider whistle-blowing openly.
The implications of our research is that you should feel confident whistle-blowing when you believe a wrongdoing is taking place, however you must be sure to do so in the correct way. The resource makes this clear and should be useful to employees who believe they have know of a wrongdoing in their workplace and wish to act accordingly.

Introduction

'Whistle-blowing' is "the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action"(Near & Miceli, 1985, p. 4). This basically means telling someone about some misdemeanour you have witnessed happening in the company, who has the power to make a change. The motivation for this is to make sure problems occurring within the company are resolved before they become too large, but also to maintain the company's reputation and integrity.

Recognising the importance of whistle-blowing, we have created an interactive video that attempts to describe whistle-blowing and show its importance. It also needs to answer all the big questions people might have when considering making a disclosure: Is the wrongdoing serious enough? Who should I make the disclosure to? Will I be protected if I do 'blow the whistle'? The interactive aspect allows the viewer to actively engage in the events occurring within it, which forces the viewer to think about what they are seeing and help them understand what decisions they should make based on the situation they are in.

Background

Whistle-blowing today is an important matter that companies and individuals should be aware of, as if the company does not promote a whistle-blowing policy to help contain scandals internally and does not look after the employees and workplace in general, then the companies reputation could be on the line, with employees whistle-blowing to the press and Internet websites such as Wikileaks causing significant damage. It has been on the news lately, due to the fact that information that was supposed to be kept classified has now been published, for example war documents concerning Afghanistan.
We decided to work on this subject because it concerns a large percentage of the public, and with the recent headlines in the news it has become a hot topic. Whistle-blowing appears today in large-enterprises, small companies, and even in the government, causing many problems and embarrassments.

Today a large proportion of Internet users use YouTube, with it accounting for 4.8% of online time globally during December 2009 according to google Internet statistics. It could therefore be considered as the main source for watching videos online.
An interactive YouTube video is the definitive way of communicating with young people. It is engaging to users as they interact with the video, rather than being a passive observer. It's easy to understand, and we can answer many questions concerning the whistle-blowing related subject we chose.

Method

We began going about our resource by selecting a topic from the topics list, and a resource type from the resource types list.
We then proceeded by creating a list of potential topic ideas, which we refined and narrowed down into several specific topic headings. We allocated these topic headings amongst ourselves, and then each went ahead and did some individual research into our allocated topic. This research was acquired by browsing the Internet for information, focusing mainly on IEEE and ACM journals and government websites such as direct.gov.uk and legislation.gov.uk. Further information was obtained by using the Google Internet search engine and Google Scholar.
After finishing the individual research, we then individually created a realistic scenario that showcased some of the nuances surrounding the topic heading we had been researching.

We then met up, and spent a morning filming for the resource. This began with us filming Alex give an introduction to whistle-blowing, and continued with us filming the scenarios that each of us had come up with previously.
Mark played the role in each scenario of the employee that witnesses the wrongdoings and has to decide what action(s) to take, while the rest of the group took it in turns to both play the other characters in the scenarios and film the scenarios themselves.

Once the filming was complete, we uploaded the videos onto Rob's laptop, and began editing the video clips inside a video editing program. We removed the audio from each clip, and sequenced the clips to create the scenarios. Once the sequence for each scenario had been created, we finished off by adding voice overs to each scenario explaining what was going on.
We uploaded each scenario to YouTube, but with an interactive twist. This was that at certain points within the scenarios, we forced the user to decide on an appropriate action to take given the current situation in the scenario, and depending on the choice made took them to a particular ending for that scenario.

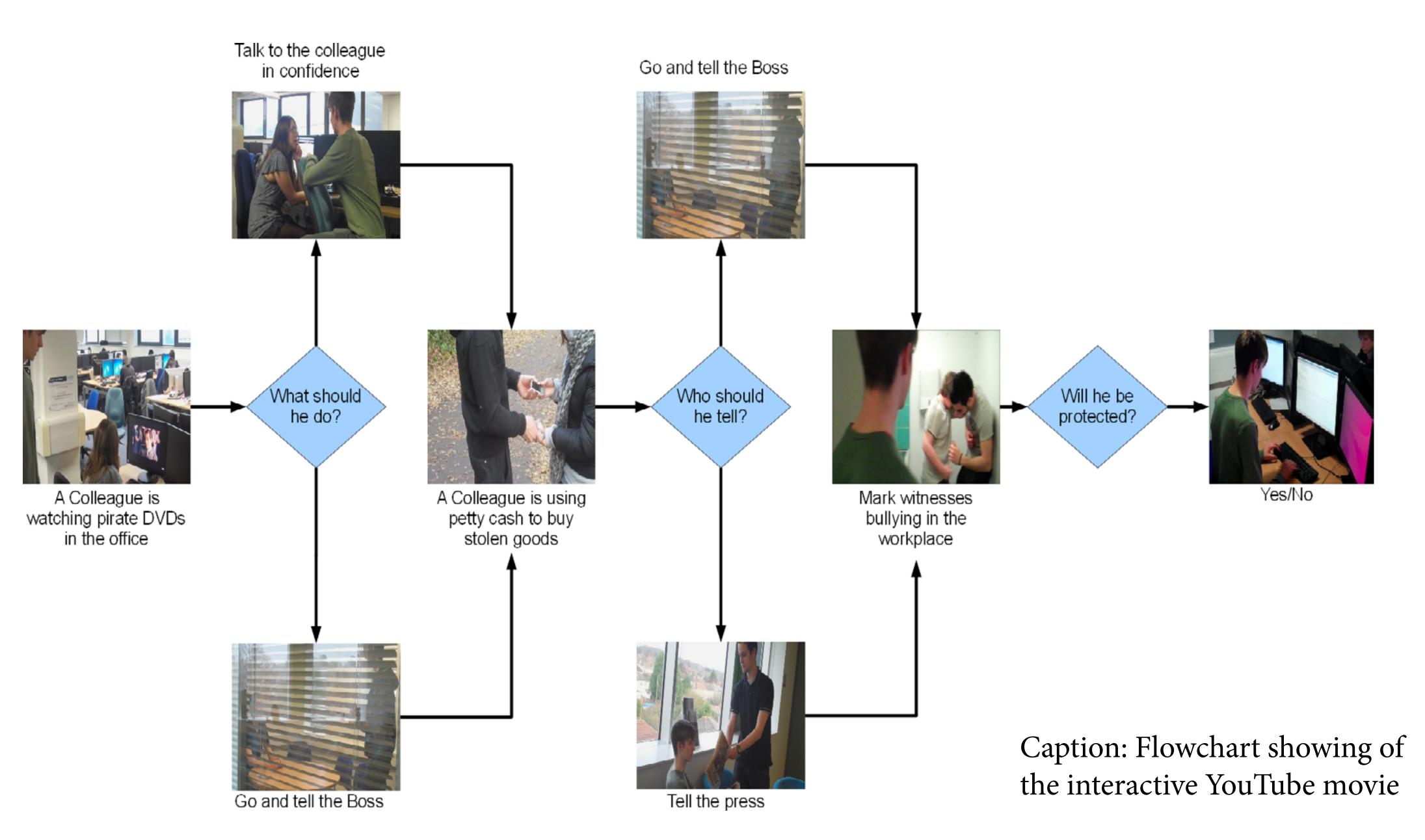At this point the resource was complete, and we uploaded it to YouTube.

Discussion

The final scenario is another serious issue. Mr. X has witnessed someone in the company physically bullying another person in the company, and decides that he would like to go ahead and whistle-blow on that person. The main interactive question for this question is 'Should Mr X. whistle-blow anonymously?' with simple yes/no options. This is the lead up to a detailed commentary about protection for whistle-blowers. Both options lead to the same video, as in this case it does not matter too much which is chosen but there are still different considerations. The commentary discusses many different questions and laws concerning the protection of those who whistle-blow as this is one of the greatest issues affecting those who consider it, especially if uncovering illegal activity.

Overall this resource forms a good informative base for the topic of whistle-blowing. It covers the major questions that people ask about it and answers them in a way that is easy to understand. It also uses a format which is interesting compared to other resources, many of which do not include an interactive element, so this will convince people to take advantage of this video. To enhance this resource, some case studies about real scenarios could be covered. There is also scope for a more complex storyline, where different answers lead to different questions and consequences in the film.

Conclusion

The video demystifies the technical and legal details by presenting a situation in which the viewer might find themselves in at some point, and presenting the relevant details as a result of the decision they made. This encourages the viewer to explore the different options, and as a result gets the user interested in what is going on.

In the future we hope that this resource can be used to raise the common knowledge of the subject areas surrounding whistle-blowing. The topic of whistle-blowing is very important to companies in recent times, as we have shown, so this learning resource is essential for educating people of all ages.

Caption: Flowchart showing of the interactive YouTube movie

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This resource can be found on YouTube at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZstcOgBHjAw

or via the Southampton University EdShare at:
http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/6340/

by Group 16 (Tutor Group):
Dr Ken Thomas (kst@ecs.soton.ac.uk)

Alexandra Elliott: ase1g08@ecs.soton.ac.uk
Thomas Grainger: tag1g09@ecs.soton.ac.uk
Alexander Rotsides: adr1g09@ecs.soton.ac.uk
Mark Salvin: ms28g09@ecs.soton.ac.uk
Robert Streeting: rsws1g09@ecs.soton.ac.uk