

# Investigating a Workplace Romance Gone Awry

*Third Wednesday Webinar Series*

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**EIS** EXPERT  
INVESTIGATION  
SOLUTIONS

Presented by **Whitney Brown**  
and **Richard Lehr**

# IDENTIFYING **EXPOSURE** AND **DOWNSIDES**



*Quid Pro Quo* Sexual Harassment Claims



Hostile Work Environment Sexual Harassment Claims



Loss of Credibility



Breaches of Confidentiality

# IDENTIFYING EXPOSURE AND DOWNSIDES

Such office relationships between women and men with more seniority were common at the network in the 2010s, according to current and former employees.

Sascha had heard rumors that other colleagues slept together in an edit bay, where the window was covered by a poster, and that after having affairs with executives, certain women had been promoted.



## Inside the 'Horned Up' Office Culture at ABC News

"It felt like everybody was sleeping around," says one former Good Morning America staffer.



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thecut Sascha didn't pay much attention to T.J. Holmes when he began working as an anchor for ABC News in 2014. But a few months later, after Holmes asked the then-27-year-old for help setting up his Instagram account, he quickly became flirtatious. "I'm learning a lot about you. I might actually like you," he wrote in an email. They texted for hours one weekend, and Holmes expressed what Sascha calls a "crazy amount of interest" in her personal life. She knew he was married but found his charisma intoxicating. It wasn't long, she says, before he booked a hotel near the network's Upper West Side headquarters and sent her the details. When she walked into the room, he was ...



# INVESTIGATOR SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS



Avoid traditional bias concerns



Must be comfortable with explicit language, subject



Investigator must carry weight of top authority

# WHEN **WITNESSES** DON'T WANT TO **TALK**



Make realistic promises of confidentiality



Commit to the importance of policies and culture



Honey first; but don't forget your leverage

# UNDERSTANDING RISKS FOR INVOLVED PARTIES

In 2017, Ruth told HR that an editor who called her “babe” had put his hand on her bare thigh while they worked together in a dark, soundproof edit bay. She was in her late 20s and remembers a representative telling her that the company never took action because Ruth “didn’t seem that mad”

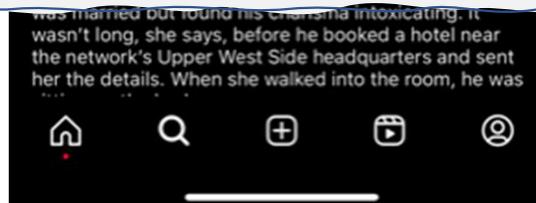


**Inside the ‘Horned Up’ Office Culture at ABC News**

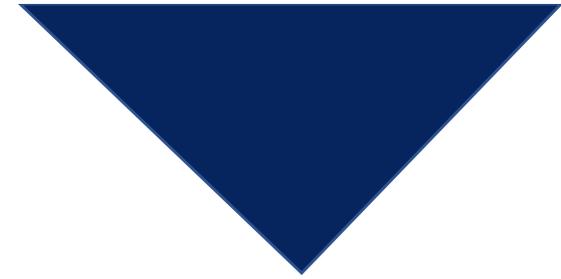
“It felt like everybody was sleeping around,” says one former Good Morning America staffer.

Alicia, a former ABC News producer who dated an older co-worker, ... found herself worrying that one executive had “turned very, very sour on me,” which she suspected was because they had found out about the relationship.

Watching the tabloids publish the names photos of other women who were involved with Holmes, without their permission, makes her worry the same might happen to her.



# SIDE BAR: THE LOVE CONTRACT



Reporting obligation for breakup



Maintaining status quo (no HWE/QPQ concerns)



Confirms key conditions

# THANK YOU

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