When to spill the beans about your BOSS

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Who loves a mole, the lousy informer who smuggles information – about kickbacks, shady deals, and love-money spent on his boss’s keeps into the chamber of the Big Man in the company? Isn’t he a smelly rat in the eyes of many? May be it was the case in the past. But today, many high-powered business organizations and even middle-size establishments are frantically setting up hot-lines and special rooms to spill such information.

Why are they hammering into their work codes provisions for the employees to “spy decently” on the boss’s underhand dealings – pocketing payoffs, packing a brand with adulterated ingredients?

There is no doubt that “sneaking with good intention” is on the rise today. It has even become a sacred obligation on the part of the employee. From private banks, stock brokers, garments industries, largescale supermarkets and multinationals to leading NGOs, the demand for licenced ratting and heavy-duty gossip is spiralling.

Even in hundreds of smaller out-fits the “small fries” now enjoy lapping up juicy information about crooked goings-on inside their boss’s rooms.

Instead of sweeping it under the carpet, the dirty linen is laundered before the right man, who can either fire or favour the wrongdoer. But the question is when one should resort to such extreme actions and how? Because, in a sticky situation the done thing would be to hold one’s tongue. Those who are monitoring this trend say that things would be less messy if the company sets down a code that defines

unwelcome practice and prescribes a device something like a hot-line to an ethics office that offers both anonymity and a reliable ear to breathe the tales.

Even such strategies will not make it a simple affair. Recently it was reported that a dozen employees working in a leading hotel had anguished for weeks before they opened the lid on the misdeeds of their boss. But an official dealing with discipline in the hotel said that although the informants felt relieved after the culprit was fired, later they were struck by a lingering sense of guilt.

It becomes worse when the company hits back. Three men recently faced this bitter experience when they quit a leading firm after exposing its downright shady deals including high-pressure sales tactics and infraction. When they went public with their charges the firm hit back by filing defamation cases against them. If they lose their case, the three could be fined.

Given such a risky turn of events, one feels its prudent to speak up only when the behaviour seems gross and repeated. Says an ethics officer of a multinatinal company: “You wouldn’t sneak on your boss for taking home a stapler, but you would for taking home a computer. You wouldn’t sneak on him for having one dinner you knew didn’t have any business angle, but you would if it was a pattern.”

Before sneaking about the wrongdoer its better to ask these seven questions:

1. Am I totally clean? You can be sure that the person against whom you bring charges will try to discredit you by turning up any blemish in your record.

2. ***If I confront the offender will he change?*** A university professor warns that “if you immediately go above your boss’s head, you violate his right to explain himself.”

3. Is this behaviour unethical or illegal? An expert in the field says that unless there is dan ger to others or illegality, “whistleblowing is morally permitted but not morally required.”

4. If a gross and repeated practice continues, can it cause serious harm to someone to colleagues, customers, users?

5. Is there a reasonable chance for success? There is no point in bringing the charge to the notice of your boss's boss if that higher-up just ignores it.

6.Will the long-term benefits outweigh the harm?

7. Am I prepared to suffer the consequences? They are less severe in companies that have clear ethics codes and anonymous reporting mechanisms. There have been many instances where whistleblowers were cut off by their colleagues and were compelled to leave the company.

But at the end of the day there are worse nightmares than getting cut off from colleagues. Think of the greater disaster that may have befallen a company if the culprit was not netted in?