



At Your Own Risk

The Costly Mistake of Ignoring Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Workplace



Executive Quick Study: Top 10 Takeaways

1. One-third of companies have dealt with a sexual harassment or assault incident.
2. Sexual assault costs the U.S. economy \$220 billion per year.
3. Invisible costs include low productivity, absenteeism, increased health care costs, poor morale and significant reputational harm.
4. More than half of all women (71 percent by some estimates) in corporate America experience sexual harassment and assault at some point in their careers.
5. Eight percent of rapes occur while the victim is at work.
6. Certain professional roles face higher instances of sexual harassment or assault than others.
7. Seventy-five percent of victims who speak out face retaliation.
8. More than 90 percent of victims of sexual harassment in the workplace do not file a complaint.
9. Only 60 percent of employees think a sexual harassment claim would be fairly investigated and addressed by their company.
10. Lack of discretion in reporting systems and a lack of accountability for harassers and assaulters leads to a general lack of trust in the organization by the employee victims.



Introduction

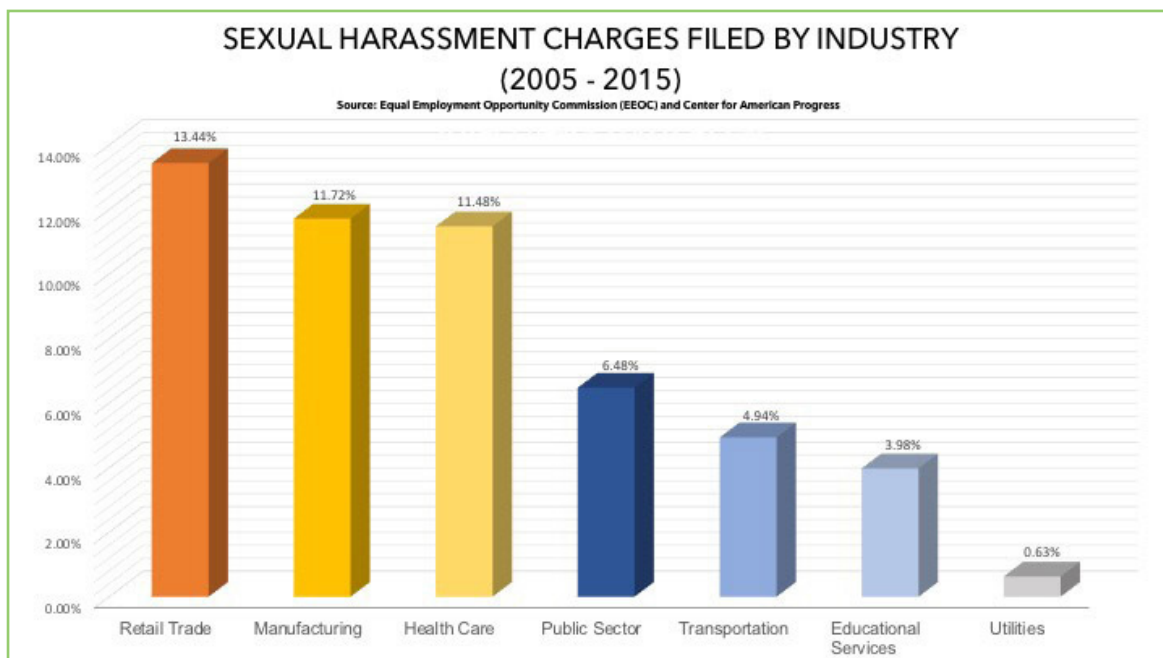
No industry is immune to the challenges and risks presented by harassment and sexual assault. They are among the most costly and damaging problems in our society and often lead to significant negative effects, including human suffering, job performance and productivity concerns, loss of trust, destructive behaviors, massive liability exposure, and institutional brand damage.

Sexual harassment in the workforce is largely driven by an uneven balance of power, whether based on gender, role, or other factors. Sexual harassment can come from co-workers, superiors, or even third-party clients and customers. Oftentimes, victims experience fear, shame, or a lack of trust in their organization's ability or willingness to hold the perpetrator(s) accountable.

This lack of trust most often manifests in an unwillingness to report incidents of sexual harassment and assault. Victims not only feel ashamed, but may fear negative implications and reprisals that can follow formal complaints, such as additional harassment or loss of one's job or future professional opportunities.

In some cases, lack of reporting may be because formal policies and procedures do not even exist. When these policies do exist, relevant information is oftentimes difficult to locate and utilize in times of need, even at large enterprises that have well-staffed human resources departments. In addition, many existing policies have outmoded or clumsy reporting processes that offer little or no discretion. This can cause survivors of harassment and assault to feel further victimized by the reporting process. Due to these factors and others, the reality is that the vast majority of incidents of sexual harassment and assaults go unreported.

The focus of this white paper is to outline the challenges facing victims of sexual harassment and assault and to offer prevention strategies that can improve reporting rates, enhance trust in the reporting process, and facilitate accountability for perpetrators. Preventing sexual harassment and assault in the workplace is not only the right and moral thing to do, but it's critical for maintaining a successful business.



Who's At Risk?

Sexual assault and harassment can impact anyone regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in five women and one in seventy-one men will be raped at some point in their lives. Same-sex harassment is as common as opposite-sex harassment. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, approximately 76 reports of sexual harassment are received every day.

Sexual harassment and assault in corporate America remains a largely unchallenged problem. A study by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that one out of three companies had dealt with sexual harassment claims. According to the International Center for Research on Women, more than half of all women (71 percent by some estimates) in the workforce experience some form of sexual harassment during their careers. In addition, eight percent of rapes occur at the victim's workplace.

There are several workplace factors that often contribute to systemic sexual harassment, which, in turn, can lead to incidents of assault.

In the service industry, **working for tips** can be a factor. People who work for tips account for 14 percent of sexual harassment complaints filed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Lone workers are also prone to harassment and assault. These individuals include building janitors, hospital and medical workers, home health care workers, hotel and hospitality staff, agricultural workers, utilities employees and others.

Male-dominated organizations and institutions, such as the military and

construction companies, have reported higher than average rates of sexual harassment and assault. In addition, a 2018 National Academy of Sciences study documented high levels of harassment of women faculty and staff in academia, particularly in the fields of science, engineering and medicine.

Organizations with **imbalanced power structures** that present significant gaps in influence between lower and mid-level staff and those in senior positions also experience high rates of sexual harassment and assault. As witnessed in the recent problems at the U.S. military academies, junior employees often fear retaliation for speaking out against perpetrators, allowing these structural risk factors to go unchanged.

What Are The Costs?

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center pegs the lifetime economic burden of rape at \$3.1 trillion, of which government sources pay approximately \$1.1 trillion. Research by the Institute for New Economic Thinking found that the typical Fortune 500 company loses \$14 million per year as a result of diverting management and resources away from business-related activities to deal with the company's defense against sexual harassment claims.

Beyond the obvious legal fees, there are a multitude of damages that enterprises incur when incidents of sexual harassment or assault are allowed to take place. These include costs associated with absenteeism, poor morale, increased health care costs, lost productivity and staff turnover. Some estimates place the costs here at more than \$7 million per year.

Increased absences stemming from harassment represent a significant risk to a company's bottom line. A 2016 study by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board found that one in six employees who experienced sexual harassment took sick or annual leave following their harassment.

Systemic harassment that goes unchecked can also lead to significant employee turnover. A 2017 study of women in the workplace found that the targets of harassment were 650 percent more likely than non-targets to change jobs. Corresponding studies of the costs associated with replacing employees estimated the average cost at 16 to 20 percent of an employee's annual salary, increasing to 213 percent of salary for experienced managers or professional staff.

Recent data on the non-tangible costs related to sexual harassment and assault, such as damage to brand and reputation, is lacking. However, it is known that reputation damage can severely hamper an organization's ability to attract new talent and maintain client relationships.

Media reports detailing high-profile sexual harassment cases shed some light on the financial links to reputational damage. Take the example of ride-sharing company Uber. Not only did the company suffer from a string of sexual assault charges against its drivers, but in 2017, former engineer Susan Fowler published a blog exposing a corporate culture that promoted systemic sexual harassment.

Her essay resulted in the termination of 20 employees and the ousting of company co-founder and CEO Travis Kalanick. Perhaps worse, the company lost more than 200,000 customers to a viral #DeleteUber movement. In a recent survey of consumer attitudes, consultancy cg42 found that the percentage

of customers with negative views of the company jumped from nine percent to 27 percent when the news began to tarnish the company's reputation.

Likewise, 21st Century Fox paid \$45 million in the first quarter of 2017 to settle allegations of sexual harassment. In 2018, CBS paid Eliza Dushku \$9.5 million to settle sexual harassment claims against Michael Weatherly. Google famously paid the creator of Android mobile software \$90 million to exit the company gracefully after it discovered what company officials said was a credible complaint against him by a co-worker alleging sexual misconduct.

These examples alone demonstrate how sexual assault and harassment in the workplace can significantly impact an organization's reputation, talent acquisition, and bottom line. Understanding and addressing the risk and impacts of these incidents is crucial.

To further demonstrate the pervasiveness of this issue and its repercussions, we will now present two relevant case studies. The first is an interview with a survivor of sexual assault, and the second is a discussion of incident reporting in U.S. military academies.

Viewpoint Q&A: Jade Salazar

Jade Salazar is a Team Lead of Customer Success at Vector Solutions and a survivor of sexual assault.



Q: What are some of the things that survivors face in their personal and professional lives after they experience a sexual assault?

A: That is a very big question, but there are so many different things they face. In my personal experience, I survived an assault that was right before college. When I started college I had a full ride, I had full tuition paid for. I went from a 4.0 GPA in high school to a 0.6 GPA during my first semester of college. I ended up having to drop out in my second year, after having to fight to stay in and essentially prove to the university that I had been assaulted. That's why I was not doing well. Not having a college degree and then having to go back, that was a huge struggle for me when it came to my professional life and getting into the workforce.

Then also for me, and for a lot of survivors, there was trauma. I had really severe PTSD for about five years. That first year I wouldn't sleep very well. I would get a lot of night terrors. Night terrors, for people who don't know, are when you get woken up in the middle of the night, or the moment you start to fall asleep you get flashbacks. I had a lot of flashbacks. I had a lot of triggers. I think people use the word triggers and triggering kind of casually now, but when you have PTSD, it's something that really does affect your life. Essentially, you can just be walking throughout your day and something puts

you right back into that moment.

Trauma really affects you. For me, and for a lot of people, it kind of stopped me from living my life for a little bit. There was a bit of arrested development. I was assaulted at 17, then I finally got help at 23. But even at 23 I was still wearing the clothes of a 17 year old. My mental state just stopped a little bit. There are all kinds of studies about what trauma does to the brain, and how it just kind of arrests it for a bit.

Then also debt. I went into debt because I think you just kind of shut down. You're not really sure what to do. If I look at my life during that five-year period, I dropped out of college, I went into debt, I was living with people that I really didn't trust and that probably weren't great people to be living with. Sexual assault really affected my entire life.

Q: We know that there are precursor activities that often contribute to incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Can you share some of your thoughts on these activities?

A: I think a lot of times it's looking at someone's language and how they interact with other people. I don't want to make this about very specific genders, but a lot of times if a man isn't treating women with much respect, I think that's a precursor behavior. If someone takes power a little bit to their head, I think that can be a precursor behavior as well.

I think those things can be definite signs that something's going to happen. But another interesting thing is as we're trying to prevent everything, a lot of times that same behavior has been seen in people who have committed mass shootings and things. So a lot of times when there is a large-scale event that happens, you can look back at the perpetrator's life and how they treated people, how they treated women or animals, and see those signs.

Q: Let's shift gears. One of the main challenges that we are working on at Vector Solutions is the lack of reporting of sexual harassment and assault, and in this white paper we discuss the lack of trust and discretion in many reporting mechanisms. Can you talk a little bit about why it's so difficult to get victims to report?



A: One thing that I've really appreciated about a lot of the crisis center work that I've done is that we focus on victim-centered reporting. What that means is allowing the victim to decide whether or not they want to pursue something legally or not. A big thing when it comes to increasing reporting is allowing

people the decision to tell someone anonymously and also allowing them the decision to tell someone who is not a police officer or a security official.

When you get the police involved, even if you totally trust the police, you know that something is going to happen to that other person, or you hope that something is going to happen to that person. So, either you are going to be in this conversation where you have to drag yourself through the mud and prove that this harassment or assault happened, especially in situations where it's really just one voice against the other, and there is little proof. Or, if you are able to prove it, now you have this other person's life in your hands, and there's going to be action taken.

A great thing about The Vector Solutions LiveSafe Mobile Platform is that you can report and actually tell someone something happened, and if you want to give a name, you can, or you can do it anonymously.

We also have dashboard filters, so that an assault report can go to the right person. In schools it can go to somebody's Title IX office, and then in an organization you can designate someone to handle those claims. I think this is really important because everyone has this inner knowledge that the moment you take something to security or even to HR, it's going to be immediately escalated and it's either going to be an investigation or there's going to be immediate swift action taken that affects somebody else's life.

Q: For someone who wants to report but doesn't trust their employer's existing system, do you, as a survivor, think that the capabilities of the Vector Solutions LiveSafe platform would make

that person more comfortable and more likely to report?

A: Absolutely. I think it definitely would, and that's the whole reason that I'm here. I wish I had had this app when I was struggling. I wasn't able to really reach out for help in those moments.

In addition, the idea that you can text what happened to you and send that in is a lot easier than having a conversation or trying to walk up to somebody, whether it be a security guard or even your boss, and say, 'Hey, this happened.' Face-to-face conversations are hard, especially when it's an uncomfortable conversation.

I think that is a huge thing that we're doing. Then again, if you are able to report anonymously, that's another huge thing that will really help reporting.

Q: You have another interesting use case for Vector's LiveSafe reporting platform, and that is using LiveSafe to hone in on repeat offenders. Explain how LiveSafe can help tackle that aspect of this challenge.

A: Repeat offenders are a really enormous part of this conversation and I think tracking them can have one of the biggest impacts on this problem. Essentially, if somebody has done it once, it's probably a pattern of behavior. It's not coming out of nowhere. No one just snapped one day and decided to start harassing people.

A lot of times, as you've seen in the news recently, when somebody finally comes out and gives someone's name, then you have all of these other people come out of the woodwork that say, 'Yes, I also experienced this.' And so one of the great things that technology in general, but specifically the LiveSafe App, can do, is

help investigators go back and search that name. They can say, 'Okay, has that name ever popped up before?' And if it has, then they have all of those tips right there, available.

I would even go as far as to say that it would be a great best practice for schools and companies. If anyone ever had a name or sent in a specific name, just make it a best practice to immediately search the LiveSafe tip dashboard.

If a victim's brain experiences trauma, it doesn't store that memory in a linear fashion. It doesn't store it chronologically. And so a lot of times your memory might be all over the place, and so you don't want to come forward because you're afraid that if you're asked questions, you won't know how to respond or your story might change, just because of how you're trying to recall this information.

When somebody else says, 'Hey, we have multiple people who have reported this, or reported this same person,' then it doesn't rely so much on your story and your own experience. Now you have multiple people. Maybe it doesn't have to get to a point where you're even having to disclose or tell your story, or at least not in as much detail. I think that's a really, really huge part of being able to report and stop repeat offenders, and I love that our technology is able to help that.





Case Study: U.S. Military Academies

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Defense has faced one of the biggest challenges to discipline and readiness in decades: the continued rise of sexual assault and harassment incidents at the three elite military academies — the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY; the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD; and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO.

Awareness of this problem dates back more than 15 years, when an anonymous tip led to an investigation that revealed that 12 percent of women who graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2003 reported being victims of rape or attempted rape. In addition, 70 percent of the 579 women cadets alleged they had been victims of severe sexual harassment.

The Defense Department soon responded with a department-wide policy on sexual assault response: the formation of joint task forces and training for more than 1,200 sexual assault response coordinators. However, it seems that these policies didn't lead to meaningful change in the service academies.

According to a congressionally-mandated anonymous survey of cadets across all three service academies, the number of unreported sexual assaults surged by nearly 50 percent from 2016-2018. However, the number of

reported cases rose by only five to 117. This included a range of misconduct up to and including rape.

Reporting remains the central challenge facing the military service academies when it comes to combating sexual assault. To date, the vast majority of victims have refused to make official reports because they fear reprisals from both peers and senior leaders. This significant trust deficit has been exacerbated by a relatively clumsy reporting infrastructure that lacks discretion and that rarely leads to any legal or professional consequences for the perpetrator.

Improving reporting rates will require significant culture changes at the academies as well as a strategy shift from one that focuses heavily on training, education, and awareness to one that emphasizes daily prevention efforts and reporting of destructive or precursor behaviors.

Reporting

Sixteen percent of women at the academies are sexually assaulted, according to a recent Pentagon survey, but without reports, accountability is lacking.

"Accountability for perpetrators is almost nonexistent," said Col. Don Christensen, the former chief prosecutor for the Air Force, while testifying at a hearing of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee. "Last year, only four offenders were convicted at a court martial for their offenses, and a tiny handful were discharged.

This should be a wake-up call for academy leadership.”

Lack of reporting remains one of the central challenges facing the academies, a problem that is not at all different from other institutions. Cadets who are victimized are afraid to come forward because of the ever-present fear of retaliation, including being dismissed from the academy. As a result of this fear and the lack of trust in senior leaders, cadets most often file what is known as a restrictive report. When filing a restrictive report, cadets can seek medical services, legal services, or counseling after an assault but are assured that seeking those services will not launch a corresponding official criminal investigation.

A closer look at how the academies have handled reporting shows that there is good reason for cadets to feel like they can't make an anonymous report. The problem isn't with the people handling the reports, but rather with the reporting infrastructure. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point, for example, moved its sexual assault coordinator office to a location above the dining hall, and the Air Force academy established a satellite center for reporting within walking distance of the dorm rooms. These locations make it difficult for students to use these facilities without being seen by peers, which in turn reduces the willingness of victims to report incidents. In addition, after-hours reports still require a phone call, which can make reporting increasingly difficult.

Vector Solutions believes that there are better ways to facilitate reporting. Leveraging modern mobile tools enables anonymity, provides individuals with the assurance of discretion, and allows the

report to be automatically routed to the appropriate victim advocacy office, or directly to the special victims counsel's office. This technology helps victims put trust back into the reporting system.

“One of the issues that I think we have to address moving forward is the fact that there are so many restricted reports, and they're restricted because of this fear of retaliation,” said Rep. Jackie Speier, Chair of the House Armed Military Personnel Subcommittee. “I think that if we get to a place where that information is shared, maybe online...so that the victim can go online, put down information about their experience, upload photographs if they want, identify the perpetrator, then if they see that that perpetrator is in fact responsible for conducting himself or herself in the same manner with others, they are more motivated to come forward in an unrestricted report, and hopefully rid the military of the predator.”

Precursor and Destructive Behaviors

Although training and education programs are important to reversing the trend of sexual harassment and assault, there is an indisputable, urgent need to enhance primary prevention efforts.

Those efforts must include making it easy for community members to report the precursor behaviors that often lead to sexual assault. To date, the service academies have focused the vast majority of their time and effort on education, training, and awareness — an understandable approach given the age and maturity of their audience. But it hasn't worked. Sexual harassment and assault are problems that organizations cannot train their way out of, says retired navy captain, Charles Marks, the former sexual assault prevention and response

officer at U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia.



Captain Charles Marks (USN-Ret.)

“We started out at the beginning doing awareness training. But we’re at a place now where we’re worried about and trying to improve the culture in the workplace — how people interact with each other every day,” Marks said. “Our prevention efforts rope together substance abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, we get after domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and we’re also looking at suicide behaviors and suicide prevention.”

Many of the precursor behaviors that the Navy monitors for are gender-based, Marks said. “When you think about male victim sexual assault, we’re very much worried about bullying, initiation rituals, and hazing. Those are the things that tend to precede the more nefarious activities associated with male victim sexual assault. For female-victim sexual assault, we’re really trying to counter things like gender inequality, alcohol, promotion of alcohol abuse, sexual jokes and sexual innuendo in the workplaces,” he said.

Lessons For Private Industry?

To those who think the problems with sexual harassment and destructive behaviors are worse in the military than in society at large, Marks offers a sobering assessment.

“The military is a reflection of U.S. society. The problems that we see inside of the military are reflective of what we see in society at large,” he said. “There’s a perception that the problems in the military are far worse than those in society when actually the opposite is true. We find that, and this is something that I think most organizations can take away from this, if you have an organization with a higher calling to which folks identify, the incident of destructive behaviors goes down pretty dramatically.”

Last year, the Navy conducted nearly 600 focus groups across the service to better gauge what the issues and challenges were when it came to sexual harassment.

“One thing we discovered is that across the board, regardless of rank, time in service, or gender, every sailor felt that we had a problem with the way we treated each other day-to-day, meaning there was unfair treatment, use of foul language, denigrating behaviors in the workplace that do not align with our core values,” said Marks.

“What’s really interesting, though, is when it came to what you can do about those kinds of behaviors, there’s a fundamental difference between men and women,” he said. “In the case of a male, they’re worried about ridicule in the workplace. In the case of a female, they’re worried about ending their career by speaking up. That playing field is not level.”

Improving Trust and Reporting With LiveSafe

Technology offers a unique opportunity to introduce a new level of discretion and trust into the reporting procedures of organizations.

Deploying an effective reporting system that is easy to use, available on any smartphone, and able to provide automated routing of anonymous reports is among the most critical components of an effective sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention program.

Vector Solutions' LiveSafe risk intelligence platform is not only fundamental to improving reporting of incidents by victims, but also empowering bystanders and witnesses to discreetly alert security teams of their observations.

The ability to remain anonymous is a critical component of successfully driving high-quality, community-sourced intelligence. If a LiveSafe user has opted to invoke anonymity, no personally identifiable information (PII) is submitted along with the security intelligence.

Automated routing of complaints and tips is vital to ensuring that reports of sexual harassment and assault are delivered to the appropriate office and authority within an organization for investigation, escalation, and response. As part of LiveSafe implementation, Vector Solutions team members work with clients to develop and deploy unique, site-specific reporting procedures and routing systems so that information is received and addressed in a timely manner.

Two-way communications provide the added benefit of giving the victim the



opportunity to seek advice or guidance during the reporting process.

In addition, the Resources feature ensures that LiveSafe users have instant access to organization-specific policies, procedures, and training resources that can be referenced with or without internet access.

Of course, sexual assaults rarely take place in locations where there are witnesses. Employees or students who travel alone can be at greater risk. That's why LiveSafe developed the SafeWalk feature.

SafeWalk allows users to invite up to three people to virtually accompany them to their destination. The virtual companion(s) need not have the LiveSafe Mobile App installed.

Both the walker and the virtual companion(s) have a panic button in case of emergency and can chat while the SafeWalk feature is in use. No information about the walker's physical location is disclosed to anyone unless an emergency option has been initiated by the walker or their companion. SafeWalk also has a Driving Mode, which appropriately adjusts the projected arrival time.

LiveSafe recognizes that privacy is critical to maintaining trust. By offering real-time threat awareness and anonymous two-way communications capabilities, LiveSafe helps organizations surface actionable early warning insights and protect their communities from the threat and impacts of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and more.

About Vector Solutions

Vector Solutions is the leading provider of award-winning, intelligent SaaS solutions that help organizations and individuals operate at the highest level and prepare for more challenging workplaces and environments. Providing industry-focused solutions that connect content and technology, our unique product set includes learning management, continuing education (CE), compliance training, workforce scheduling, safety management and more. Our extensive online and mobile learning library features carefully curated world-class content to meet the unique needs of professionals in the industrial, engineering, education, and public safety industries. Reaching more than 19 thousand clients and 14 million users worldwide, Vector's mission is to serve everyday heroes by delivering intelligent software solutions that empower them to make safer, smarter, better decisions. The company was founded in 1999 and is headquartered in Tampa, Florida.

For more information, visit www.vectorsolutions.com. Follow us on Twitter [@VectorPerform](https://twitter.com/VectorPerform) and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VectorPerformance.

In 2020, Vector Solutions acquired LiveSafe, the leading risk intelligence platform that enables two-way communications between employees and an organization's security department and other risk management entities. By leveraging LiveSafe's anonymous reporting capabilities and its data-driven analytics engine, companies, educational institutions and government agencies can get ahead of emerging threats and prevent serious safety or security incidents. The LiveSafe platform has protected more than two million people across hundreds of universities and Fortune 1,000 organizations.

LiveSafe can be downloaded for free from the Google Play or iTunes app stores.

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