

Designing an Internal Complaint System

General Instructions

Robin Stellar, a research scientist at Biochemix Unlimited, came in early to the lab and overheard Archibald Arrow, a young research colleague talking on the phone. He was talking about Rupert Overween, head of the laboratory in L Building at Biochemix. Archibald seemed very upset. He was talking on the phone with his brother. This is what the research scientist overheard.

Archibald said that he had recently gone through a pile of correspondence in the lab director's office. Overween had asked Archibald to pull out two manuscripts sent for review—he apparently asked Archibald to read them and draft reviews for his signature. Overween had told him that the reviews were due a month ago, so Archibald came in very early to work on it.

In that pile, Archibald said that he accidentally found a patent application, completely filled out, signed, sealed, delivered—with letters attached showing that the application was accepted by the US Patents Office. Archibald was telling his brother that the patented invention was actually his own work. Not only that—Archibald mentioned that he had done much of the work before he even came to this company. Overween apparently simply took the invention and turned it in as his own; his was the only name on the application. Archibald thinks the licensing rights may possibly be worth a lot.

Robin Stellar came out into the lab as Archibald got off the phone, and told him that he should file a formal grievance or get a lawyer and go to the US Patents Office. Archibald seemed very uncomfortable...and then became furious with Robin for eavesdropping and then muttered, "There is nothing at all I can do. This is just the way things are. Stiff upper lip. In this lab you gotta be a team player and know your place on the team. Overween is simply much too powerful. You cannot tell anyone about this."