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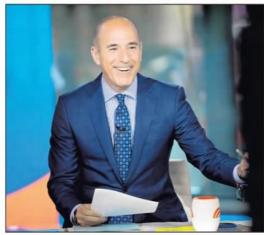
## Sex claims suddenly high priority

## By Samantha Masunaga

Lurid allegations of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment lawsuits swirled for years around former American Apparel founder and Chief Executive Dov Charney.

As early as 2004, a reporter from Jane magazine wrote that Charney masturbated in front of her. (Charney has asserted that the act was consensual. In a follow-up story, the reporter said she was not a victim and was not exploited.) A year later, former employees filed lawsuits that claimed he fondled himself in front of them or appeared in the office only in his underwear.

It wasn't until summer



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MATT LAUER was fired after NBC received a detailed complaint of "inappropriate sexual behavior." 2014 that the Los Angeles company's board suspended Charney as president and CEO, citing allegations of improper behavior and misuse of company funds. By the end of the year, Charney was officially fired.

That was then. In today's post-Harvey Weinstein era, employers are taking days, rather than months, to deal with accusations of sexual misconduct.

The accelerated responses to harassment scandals reflect a calculation by organizations that any delay could cast them as uncaring or evasive — and land them on the wrong side of social media and news reports swirling around each new scandal.

[See Response, C6]

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## Quick reactions after allegations

[Response, from CI]

"You want to report your bad news," said Tracy williams, chief executive and founder of Olmstead williams Communications, a crisis and reputation management firm based in Los Angeles. "If somebody else reports it, then it looks like you've been hiding, which is the worst thing you can do."

On Wednesday morning, MBC reported its own bad news first — abruptly announcing that "Doday" show co-anchor Matt Lauer had been fired after the network received a detailed com-

received a detailed com plaint Monday about "inap paint Monday about "map-propriate sexual behavior in the workplace." Entertain-ment trade publication Vari-ety later reported that Lauer had been accused of sexual harassment by multiple

women.
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Reillor said he was fired by
Minnesota Public Radio after the news organization
said it was notified in Octoper of allegations of inappropriate behavior while Keillor
was responsible for producing "A Prairie Home Companion."

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The latest responses are not only swift but, in many cases, sweeping.
Minnesota Public Radio said it would stop rebroad-casting "The Best of A Prairie Home Companion," hosted by Keillor, and end distribution and broadcast of his show, "The Writer's Al-manse."

orhis show, "The Writer's Alransac."
Netflik halted production offitshit series "House of Cards" amid allegations that actor Kevin Spacey had committed harassment and committed harassment and sassault — in some cases toward minors — and Sony Pictures dropped the actor from his lead role as J. Paul Getty in the upcoming film "All the Money in the World."
Spacey's scenes were "escenes were cases Spacey's scenes were re-shot with actor Christopher

Plummer.
And not only did political journalist. Mark Halperin lose his job at NBC after allegations of sexual harassment, but Penguin Press pulled the plug on his book about the 2016 presidential election.



Leila Navini mez

GARRISON KEILLOR, shown on a live broadcast for "A Prairie Home Companion," said he was fired by
Minnesota Public Radio after the organization was notified of allegations of inappropriate behavior.

"The process of analyzing allegations and making determinations about misconduct hasn't changed," said Stephen Hirschfeld, founding partner and co-managing partner at employment and higher education law firm Hirschfeld Kraemer. "What has changed is the pressure that employers bet under right now to move quicker, to be more decisive with the decisions and, in some cases, to publicize their actions." Companies have a number of reasons to act quickly. The heightened public sensent laws dictate that after the Weinstein scandal means that brands' reputations — and their market

made, though the "appro-priate" aspect is up to the employer, Hirschfield said. The law could say that a less-serious allegation and first-time offense in which the employee admits what he or she did could be used as an opportunity to educate the person and hopefully get him or her to change, he said. But if an employee has a track record of activity or has been warred, employers

track record of activity or has been warred, employers normally have to terminate the person, Hirschfeld said. Accusations of sexual as-sault, molestation or inappropriate touching should result in firing because of po-tential litigation and to pro-tect the health and safety of the victim and the rest of the

company, he said.

Crisis communications specialists counsel companies to be the first to disclose a problem, take action quickly and be honest. A case that's often cited is lobs on a Volume transfer of the country transfe case that's often cited is Johnson & Johnson's strong actions after seven people died in the Chicago area after taking cyanide-laced Tylenol capsules in 1982. J&J quickly urged consumers to stop taking the capsules. Then it yanked Tylenol — a major profit generator — off shelves in Chicago and later nationwide. After additional poisonlings several years latter, J&J made the costly decision to no longer sell any medication in capsule form because it could not guaran-

tee their safety.

Publicizing the circumstances around a high-profile employee's departure—as the "Today" show did with Lauer and CBS News did with journalist Charlie Rose — is "unusual," Hirschfeld

with journals of the control of the an employee would sud-denly no longer be with the company. For high-level exe-cutives, maybe a press re-lease would be issued, say-

lease would be issued, say-ing they wanted to "spend more time with their family." But companies now find it necessary to give consum-ers more information so they have an idea of what hap-pened and how it was dealt with.

Employers now must

pened and how it was dealt with.

Employers now must between protecting people's privacy and making sure that those who come forward with allegations feel they are taken seriously. Hirschfeld said.

Sharon Vinick has represented victims of sexual harassment and misconduct as a managing partner with Levy Vinick Burrell Hyams. She recently represented an assistant to UC Berkeley's

Levy Vinick Burrell Hyams. She recently represented an assistant to UC Berkeley's former law school dean, who admitted to inappropriately hugging, kissing and touch-ing the assistant and later resigned from his position. Vinick said the usual drill for a larve company faced with Vinick said the usual drill for a large company faced with allegations of sexual miscon-duct is to conduct an inter-nal investigation or hire an outside firm to talk to the ac-cuser, witnesses and the ac-

cused.
She said she's seen no variation from that script so far, but acknowledges that Weinstein "completely changed the conversation." "For someone to be accused on Monday and fired on Wednesday, that's unheard of in a pre-Harvey Weinstein world," Vinick said. "You just never saw that speed of action before."

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