

Predatory Behaviour: Spotting, Addressing, and Preventing

What is Predatory Behaviour?

Predatory behaviour refers to actions where one person exploits another's vulnerability, often in a manipulative or coercive manner, for personal gain or satisfaction. In the workplace, this behaviour can involve unwanted advances, manipulation, intimidation, or sexual harassment, often carried out by someone in a position of power. Predators may target individuals they perceive as weaker or less able to defend themselves.

In male-dominated environments, predatory behaviour often manifests as inappropriate comments, unwanted physical contact, persistent advances despite refusal, or creating an uncomfortable or hostile work atmosphere for others.

How to Spot Predatory Behaviour

- Overly Familiar Interactions
 - Someone constantly pushing personal boundaries, making inappropriate jokes, or overly familiar gestures, like unwanted touching or invading personal space.
- Power Imbalance Exploitation
 - Individuals using their authority or influence to manipulate or coerce others into doing something against their will, often under the guise of work responsibilities.
- Targeting Vulnerability
 - Predators often seek out those who are new, young, or otherwise vulnerable (e.g., temporary staff or junior employees).
- Persistent Advances
 - Despite clear indications of discomfort or refusal, predators may persist in their inappropriate behaviour, such as continuing to flirt or proposition someone after they've been told "no."
- Isolation Attempts
 - Predators may try to isolate their target from the rest of the team, such as trying to arrange meetings alone, encouraging late-night work, or seeking out situations where they are unsupervised.
- Dismissive of Boundaries
 - When someone disregards clear personal, professional, or physical boundaries, making others feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

How to Call It Out

- Be Direct
 - If you witness predatory behaviour, address it immediately. A simple, firm statement like, "that's inappropriate," or "stop that," can be effective in shutting it down.



- Support the Victim
 - Approach the victim privately to express your concern and offer your support. Reassure them that the behaviour they experienced is unacceptable and they don't have to tolerate it.
- Speak Up in Groups
 - If the behaviour is occurring in a group setting, saying something in front of others can help prevent further escalation. Group dynamics often dissuade predators when others hold them accountable.
- Use Your Authority
 - If you're in a leadership position, make it clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated and remind everyone of the company's code of conduct or policies on harassment.
- Encourage Reporting
 - Let the individual affected know they have options and can report the incident confidentially if they feel comfortable.

How to Report Predatory Behaviour

- Follow Company Protocol
 - Most companies have a clear process for reporting harassment or inappropriate behaviour. Familiarise yourself with these steps and use them to report the incident formally.
- Speak to HR
 - If your workplace has a Human Resources (HR) department, report the behaviour directly to them. Ensure you provide as much detail as possible, including dates, times, and witnesses if possible.
- Use Anonymous Reporting
 - If you're uncomfortable reporting the behaviour openly, check if your workplace has an anonymous reporting system.
- Escalate if Needed
 - If the behaviour is not addressed after reporting it internally, consider escalating the situation by contacting external regulatory bodies or legal authorities, especially if the behaviour is of a criminal nature.
- Document Everything
 - Keep a written record of inappropriate incidents, including dates, times, what happened, and any witnesses. This will help in making a formal complaint if necessary.

How to Prevent Predatory Behaviour

- Set Clear Boundaries and Policies
 - Have explicit workplace policies on behaviour, harassment, and inappropriate conduct, and ensure all staff are aware of these.
- Provide Training
 - Regularly offer training on harassment, consent, and predatory behaviour to help staff recognise the signs and feel empowered to speak up.



- Foster an Inclusive Culture
 - Cultivate a workplace culture that emphasises respect, inclusion, and equality. Encourage open communication and make sure employees feel safe to raise concerns.
- Supervise Isolated Work
 - Avoid putting employees in situations where they are working alone with others, particularly late at night or in remote areas. Always supervise temporary staff and ensure new hires are properly vetted.
- Encourage Team Accountability
 - Create an environment where coworkers hold each other accountable. When inappropriate behaviour is addressed by peers, it becomes harder for predators to operate unnoticed.
- Support Reporting Mechanisms
 - Make sure employees know how to report inappropriate behaviour confidentially and ensure there is no fear of retaliation for doing so.