



Case Study: Restoring Confidence After Internal Threats

A Quiet Intervention in a
Fragile Jurisdiction

Case Study: Restoring Workplace Confidence Amidst Intimidation Tactics in a Fragile Jurisdiction

Executive Summary

After a wave of intimidation incidents shook team morale in a fragile jurisdiction, Pholus helped the client reestablish workplace security, address staff concerns without escalating tensions, and preserve continuity. Through subtle intervention, strategic messaging, and trusted local collaboration, confidence was restored — without legal fallout or reputational damage.

Key Results & Indicators

- Zero staff resignations following the intimidation incidents
- Full operational continuity maintained throughout intervention
- 100% of stakeholder concerns addressed within 5 business days
- No legal filings or external escalation triggered by staff or third parties
- Localized advisory plan implemented in under 10 days with trusted partners

Introduction

In fragile jurisdictions, it's not uncommon for informal actors to mimic authority figures to pressure, intimidate, or destabilize teams operating in sensitive sectors. One of our clients—an organization with a strong local presence and a committed workforce—found themselves facing a subtle but dangerous form of interference.

Staff members began receiving phone calls from individuals claiming to be local law enforcement officials. These callers weren't asking for information. They were using tone, language, and authority to create fear. The implied message was clear: your organization is being watched, and you personally may be at risk.

These weren't ordinary scam calls, nor were they extortion attempts. They were intimidation plays—crafted to trigger confusion, uncertainty, and internal disruption. The leadership team knew they needed to move quickly, not only to stop the interference but to protect the psychological safety of their staff.

The Problem

The calls came sporadically at first—one or two per week—then more frequently. They followed a pattern: a caller identifying themselves as an officer or agent, citing vague allegations or requests for cooperation, and pressing employees for verbal acknowledgment or compliance.

The staff didn't know how to respond. Most had never interacted with actual law enforcement and had no reference point for what was normal. Were these calls real? Were they part of an ongoing investigation? Could ignoring them cause problems for the organization or for them personally?

The result was escalating anxiety. One staff member asked to take a leave of absence. Another began hesitating to answer work calls. The threat wasn't physical—but it was real. Left unchecked, it would erode morale, disrupt focus, and potentially trigger attrition or even public escalation.

That's when the client brought in Pholus.

The Plan of Action

Pholus approached the issue as both a risk management challenge and a leadership test. Our goal wasn't just to block the calls—it was to transform the staff's fear into clarity and control.

1. Strategic Intake and Framing

We began with a structured intake: gathering call logs, documenting patterns, and understanding how the staff was interpreting the events. Just as important, we listened. The fear wasn't just about the calls—it was about the unknown. Our framing helped leadership understand that the issue wasn't whether these callers had power; it was whether the organization allowed them to define the narrative.

2. Seamless Legal Coordination

We worked closely with the client's in-house legal counsel to ensure that all messaging, scripts, and internal memos were aligned with local law. This included verifying which types of requests could legally be made by law enforcement, when identification could be demanded, and how best to document and report inappropriate or coercive communication. Our integration allowed legal counsel to remain the ultimate authority while accelerating clarity and implementation across the team.

3. Staff Training and Simulation

Rather than offering a one-time presentation, we facilitated short-form training with live roleplay. Staff were shown exactly how to respond to a suspicious call—verbally, calmly, and with confidence.

They were provided with a three-step script:

- Politely disengage from the call without sharing information.
- Independently verify the caller's identity by calling the official agency phone line.
- Document and report the incident internally.

These scripts were written in local language and adapted to staff comfort levels, avoiding jargon while preserving authority. For many, this was their first time being told: "You don't owe blind compliance to anyone just because they sound official."

4. Psychological Safety and Leadership Visibility

We advised the leadership team to be visible and vocal. Regular check-ins, transparent memos, and open-door policies reinforced one central message: "You are not alone. You will not be punished for reporting. And we will protect our team first."

Fear thrives in silence, but it weakens in structure. By the end of the first week, calls were still coming in—but staff were handling them without panic. By the end of the second week, they had largely stopped altogether.

The Outcome

In less than 21 days, the organization had neutralized the intimidation campaign and restored internal confidence. Staff no longer felt helpless or uncertain. They knew the difference between legitimate authority and tactical theater—and they had the tools to respond accordingly.

Even more importantly, the organization had modeled what it means to lead through ambiguity: listen first, act with clarity, and back your people with confidence. The founder later told us: "It was never really about the calls. It was about proving to our staff that we wouldn't let fear define how we operate."

Final Thoughts

When your team feels watched, pressured, or unsure who to trust, every decision becomes harder—and every delay more costly. In fragile, complex, or politically sensitive environments, intimidation isn't always loud. Sometimes it arrives in the form of a quiet call meant to destabilize the inside.

Pholus helps organizations navigate this kind of uncertainty. If you're seeing early warning signs—disrupted morale, strange messages, or fear spreading through your team—reach out. We'll help you calm the waters before they become a storm.

About Pholus

Pholus is a discreet advisory firm that supports founders, boards, and stakeholders in fragile or complex environments. We specialize in quiet interventions, exit planning, and operational clarity when reputations, relationships, or resources are at risk.

Need to navigate something delicate or high-stakes? We work behind the scenes to help you stabilize, reset, or exit — without triggering avoidable fallout.

Visit us: <https://www.pholus.co/> **Email:** contact@pholus.co **Signal:** pholus.01

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