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Preparing to ascend your first investigation

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I have a friend who recently tackled the lifelong goal of summiting Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. My friend, Sam, along with several of his associates, planned and executed this ascent in early summer. I spoke with him several times as he prepared for his summit attempt. Sam and his associates are all in their mid- to late 60s, and none of them (although experienced) were experts in mountaineering. They were all in pretty good physical condition, and each of them prepared for the ascent by practicing their mountaineering skills on peaks close to home.

Kilimanjaro is somewhat different from other mountains. It encompasses a wide variety of ecosystems, including a tropical jungle, savannah, desert, montane forests, subalpine plants, and the alpine zone above the timberline. In addition to the change in environment, Kilimanjaro's highest peak is the highest point on the African Continent and lies just over 16,000 feet above sea level. At this altitude, climbers can experience acute mountain sickness and even death due to lack of oxygen. The changes in environment, climate, and oxygen levels add complexity and danger to the ascent. A climber *must* be prepared for the mountain and must rely on experts and those who have gone before them to assist in the preparation and successful execution of the ascent.

Much like Sam's climb on Kilimanjaro, an internal ethics investigation can be a challenging and scary endeavor, especially to the inexperienced. Very few investigations are clear-cut, the majority of them require critical thinking skills and interviewing tactics that do not come naturally to most people. As human beings, we are susceptible to our biases and have the tendency to jump to hasty conclusions. An ethics investigator must always keep an open mind and remember that the goal is to gather information. Tackling an ethics investigation can be absolutely daunting and challenging, but it can also be quite the adventure when approached correctly. Here are some of the things you can do as you prepare to climb your first ethics investigation.

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