Lawsuit Claims Google Failed to Prevent Sexual Harassment

Loretta Lee, a former rising star at the company, recounts tales of serial sexual harassment.

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A Note From The Editor

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Google's allegedly hypermasculine internal culture enabled serial sexual harassment of a female engineer, according to a new lawsuit.

Loretta Lee, a developer at the search engine between 2008 and 2016 asserts that she was the subject of constant groping, touching and inappropriate conduct. Worse, is that Google, intentionally or negligently, allegedly failed to tackle her complaints, which left her feeling isolated and unprotected. Her performance suffered and she was fired at the start of 2016, even though the documents say that she was considered an excellent performer and a rising star in the company.

Lee claims that she was subject to harassment on a near-daily basis, including her colleagues making lewd comments about her. In addition, she asserts that her drinks were spiked with whiskey, her desk was regularly pelted with balls and she was

sent messages by male colleagues asking if she wanted a “horizontal hug.” Another reportedly showed up at her home, unannounced, with a bottle of liquor and then refused to leave when asked.

Just before her dismissal, a male employee is said to have hid underneath her desk and, when she approached, jumped out. The desk-lurker then exclaimed “you’ll never know what I was doing,” leading Lee to believe that they may have installed surveillance equipment. A day later, and another co-worker is alleged to have toyed with her breasts in public, which led to a prolonged discussion with HR, although officials found the claims “unsubstantiated.”

The document then explains how Lee’s fear of being cast out was coming true, as colleagues would no longer approve her work. That, in turn, led to her being labeled as a poor performer and her eventual dismissal. Lee alleges that Google has a problem with identifying and properly tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. She is looking for in excess of $25,000 in damages for wrongful termination and discrimination,

It is the latest in a series of scandals about Google’s employee culture and its policies dealing with its staffers. One former worker was fired after publishing a misogynistic tract on the unsuitability of women for roles as engineers. Shortly after, another had their employment terminated, allegedly for criticizing the tract for being sexist and misogynistic.

The more of these stories appear in the press, the more pressure will be heaped upon the search engine to “do an Uber,” and investigate its internal culture.

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