

Treton Communications, Inc.

Religious Discrimination and Racial Harassment: What Ever Happened to MarShawn DeMur?

GB520-01

Strategic Human Resource Management

Unit 3 Assignment

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Strategic Management

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) research focuses on the contribution that HR practices can make to organizational performance and competitive advantage (Collins & Clark, 2003). Within this research context, the role of HR management as a strategic partner with influence in organizational and HR strategic decision making has growing importance (Barney & Wright, 1997). Globalization of business and the associated intensification in competitive pressures has led to an increasingly strategic role for HR professionals, directed toward aligning HR practices with business strategy (Raub, Alvarez, & Khanna, 2006). The strategic role of HR professionals focuses on strengthening the organizational value of the HRM system and its contribution toward achieving organization strategic goals (Pfeffer, 1994; Ulrich, 1997). Among HR roles, many authors argue that the “strategic role” is a pivotal one for HR professionals in today’s organization (Cleland, Pajo, & Toulson, 2000) (Mitchell & Bray, 2013)

Analysis of the Situation

Treton Communications is very well known in the telecommunications industry. In addition the headquarters in Eastern Michigan, Treton has call centers and regional operations all throughout the United States. The gross revenue was \$20 billion with 30,000 employees globally in 2012. Treton continued to expand and open new locations in the Southern and Northwestern areas of the US. The company follows strict policies and when diversity was introduced in the Chenoweth, Kansas area issues took place. The area was not exposed to enough minorities and due to this fact residence were unfamiliar with different backgrounds and how they live their life. What the residences did not recognize or were not familiar with, they found strange and made up stories about what they did not understand. The lack of diversity and

knowledge stirred chaos for MarShar DeMur who spoke out on his HR concerns regarding fair and equal employment practices.

Major Issues

The major issue at the Treton, Kansas facility is that they are facing a religious discrimination and racial harassment claim from MarShar DeMur. DeMur came in to work for a facility that was made up of 2% minorities. He visited prior to taking the position to get a feel for the area. The impression he received at that time was very inviting and he was very comfortable with relocating there. He got to know many people from the job and the community and felt it was a good fit for him.

Prior to the big change, DeMur went on to explore life in the new environment and decided to join a small African-American congregation of Internationalists. This was a very strict religious group that required special dieting, appearance and methods of worship. The final step of becoming an Internationalists included a five day intensive spiritual preparation and confirmation process in which time off from work would be required. DeMur promptly notified Jenkins, this is where the bias begins.

Clive Jenkins was the Facilities Director for the Midwest. The employee –director relationship was great until it was time for DeMur to take time off for his religious beliefs. Instead of being supportive, Jenkins started to question the religion and make implications as to what the religion is about and what they do. He ridiculed and made fun of the religion saying they do things that were false. This was not the end of the issue. As a director, Clive Jenkins is setting an example for his facility and his behavior is one of the major reasons that the

employees are acting as they are. His actions contribute to an unjust and hostile work environment.

MarShur DeMur returned to his job after a week away to find his office filled with inappropriate objects falsely signifying his new religion. One of these items was a picture of Africa decorated with strange lettering symbols. The ignorance did not stop at the employees, when Jenkins saw this all he said was that it was to be expected because of the strange and weird religion DeMur had joined. Over the next few months, situations did not get any better. There were notes and objects left signifying black magic on his desk and car. Demur thought for sure they would tire and this would all die out but sadly he was wrong. One day he had enough and when materials were left on his desk with chants, he went straight to Marta Ford in Human Resources.

Another issue on top of all these horrifying events is the fact that the HR team is not engaged with employees therefore making it that much more difficult to identify issues before they begin. Although I do feel Ford and Dixon did in fact handle the situations appropriately, there was not enough effort put into avoiding a situation as this. Due to this, the situation escalated to a point that Jenkins hired from outside for a new position opening instead of within because of his bias. There was no actual procedure set in place, DeMur took matters into his own hands when being treated unfairly. The behavior of the employees and management do match that on the corporate culture Treton is said to be. Action should be taken for just that reason. Situations as this can ruin a company brand because of the actions of a few individuals.

Alternate Courses of Action

There are quite a few potential courses of action that can be taken here. The first course of action Marta Ford to work on how the involvement of HR can make a difference. Human Resources should be interviewing potential candidates as well, not just directors. Human Resources should also be more in touch with employees and employee concerns. Finally with the HR team so absent within the facility itself, a training needs to be in place where all employees should have to undergo in order to better understand how issues like these are not acceptable.

Another course of action should be taken by Judith Dixon, the Compliance Officer, to look into the complaint currently filed and determine if DeMur was the better candidate and just not chosen because of bias or did Charles Bartlett have the skills that fit the position. It is easy to jump to conclusions because of the actions that have taken place at the organization before but unfortunately with any case proof needs to be reviewed before coming to a final determination. If DeMur does not the acquired skills needed for the position then a training program can be put in place to help him further advance his skills but if his skills are to par then Dixon needs to find out why the other candidate was a better fit for the position. If the decision was made by Jenkin based on bias behavior then the company need to open up another position and make room for DeMur either where the new position is or somewhere better.

Finally, another course of action is to undergo a full investigation to get a better idea of who was involved and the events that actually took place. With these finding disciplinary actions should be taken on everyone that took part of this harassment. The director being the leader in this facility should definitely have action taken against him for not only resisting to assist an employee but actually joining in on the mockery. That behavior is unacceptable especially

coming from a facility director. If somehow DeMur and Jenkins continue to work together, a conflict resolution needs to be put in place to not get caught up in a similar situation over time.

Recommended Action

If this situation is not responded to properly, Treton can face a law suit and charges by MarShawn DeMur. This situation could result in a formal EEOC complaint. The situation has to be addressed appropriately and carefully to better the employees and at the same time show them what will not be tolerated. All the courses of action I mentioned I feel are equally as important as the next and they should all be used together to make a better work culture. You can ever have enough training and numerous types of training were lacking in this case. Human Resources needs to step to the plate on the training being given.

An investigation is required to keep company procedure and policy in order. Unacceptable behavior has taken place and it needs to be rectified. I am not saying I think everyone involved should be fired but course of action should be taken to show them what they have done is not okay.

Summary

Treton Communications is doing well in the telecommunication industry. Being world-wide having over thirty thousand employees, it is crucial to implement workforce diversity beginning with leadership roles down to the rest. Treton needs to work on strategic planning within HR in order to address the changing workplace.

References

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