

After Kotak Mahindra, DDI's employee resigns over hate comment

Ashish Kaul who was working with DDI India as an HR professional abused Kashmiri women in a series of a tweet. His tweets didn't go well on social media and an outrage started against the company and him.



International human resources and leadership consultancy Company, Development Dimensions International (DDI) is facing backlash on social media because one of their employees posted hate comments on Twitter.

According to media reports, Ashish Kaul who was working with DDI India as an HR professional abused Kashmiri women in a series of a tweet. His tweets didn't go well on social media and an outrage started against the company and him.

People started tagging DDI and asked if the company promotes such behavior. Replying to that, DDI said, "We are investigating the full scope of the situation right now. We recognize the seriousness of these posts and do not condone violence under any circumstances."

The company headquartered was informed about the incident on Friday, May 11th about the Indian employee who had made statements on social media against members of the community in Kashmir.

"We were shocked and saddened by the nature of these posts, which are in direct violation of our mission and values. As soon as we learned about the social media posts, we immediately suspended the employee and launched an investigation to determine the full scope of the issue. As of May 12, we have accepted the individual's resignation. This individual's opinions were his alone, and do not reflect the values of DDI," said, DDI's CEO, Tacy Byham and President David Tessmann-Keys, in a joined statement.

The statement further said, "While we deeply regret this incident, we are moving forward as an organization with strengthened vigor to develop leaders that heal and support stronger workplaces and communities."

DDI highlighted that it's their mission to create better leaders around the world and the company refuses to tolerate violence and hate speech of any kind.

Future Consequences

Incidents like these put a dent in the brand image of the company. The employee's behavior on social media is not likely to have any legal implications for the company until the employee is an authorized spokesperson and he/she speaks on behalf of the organization.

As such, employees are free to conduct themselves outside the office in any way that they like. However, the conduct of an employee for example on social media can directly or indirectly affect the employer's interests, for which an employer can have the right to pursue action.

Sharing on what actions employers can take if an employee is indulging in such situation, Vikram Shroff, leader of the HR Law (Employment & Labour) team at Nishith Desai Associates highlighted some important considerations-

1. Employment may be terminated for an employee's abusive language and misuse of freedom of speech, causing damage to employer's reputation or in situations where an employer loses confidence in an employee.
2. For any act of misconduct by an employee, the employer has to initiate an internal (disciplinary) inquiry based on the principles of natural justice.
3. One of the acts constituting misconduct can include conviction of a criminal offense involving moral turpitude. In certain cases, a department inquiry prior to dismissal on the grounds of conviction may not be necessary, unless the conviction is subsequently set aside.

Well, this is not the first incident where the company has to bear the brunt of social media. In a similar case, Kotak Mahindra Bank sacked one employee over hate comments on social media and coffee chain Starbucks had to run a program for racial bias education.