

THE INCLUSIVE REPORT

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WHAT'S IN THE HEADLINES!

A 53-year-old Maple Valley woman has filed a lawsuit accusing Microsoft of gender, race and age discrimination.

Nancy Williams said in her lawsuit, filed Monday in King County Superior Court, that she was subjected to discrimination and differential treatment, as well as a hostile work environment based on her gender, race (Hispanic) and age.

Williams, who is on medical leave from her job as a software-test manager in Microsoft Azure, has been a full-time Microsoft employee since 1996. She joined the Azure group in 2010.

Williams contends in her suit that the workplace environment at Azure, which was dominated by male engineers, a "substantial percentage of whom were foreign born and of East Indian heritage," was not supportive of women employees.

Microsoft was aware of that but put up with it

because Azure, its cloud-computing platform, was a vital part of its business strategy, the lawsuit alleges.

In a statement, Microsoft said the company "provides an environment where all employees have the opportunity to be successful. We take these claims seriously and will address them with the court." According to the lawsuit, Williams in March 2012 began reporting to a new boss, a foreign-born man of East Indian descent, who was not named as a defendant in the lawsuit.

Williams' boss no longer works at Microsoft, though his departure was unrelated to this matter, according to sources close to the situation. He could not immediately be reached for comment. The lawsuit alleges Williams' boss ignored her during meetings, excluded her from important internal communications related to Azure, was dismissive of her suggestions and blamed her for situations that were not her responsibility, while treating his male subordi-

nates favorably.

She also questioned her boss, and her boss' supervisor — also of East Indian descent — over their awarding of a contract to an Indian company over other companies, the suit says.

In a meeting behind closed doors in her boss's office in January 2013, her boss "approached Williams, who was seated, and stood over her in very close proximity," requiring Williams to repeat several times: "You are my manager, I will do as you say," the lawsuit contends. Williams claims she reported this and other incidents to Microsoft's human-resources department but was cautioned against filing a formal complaint. After she did anyway, the investigation into her case lagged while she was on a two-month sabbatical, the suit says.

She also spoke of her boss's behavior to his supervisors — also of East Indian descent — but either nothing was done or she was told her complaints would lead to

negative discussions about her performance, according to the suit.

Upon her return from sabbatical, the suit alleges, Williams' boss gave her a very low rating in her performance review and waved his fists in her face.

Williams claims she suffered panic attacks and her health began to erode. She is seeking double the amount of her lost salary and bonus and stock awards incurred to date and which will accrue in the future, unspecified additional damages, and costs and attorney's fees. Williams is also asking the court to order an independent audit of the human-resources department's practices and require that every Azure employee get training on discrimination, hostile work environments and retaliation.

Find this article at:
http://seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2024241588_microsftsuitxml.html



What! Can they really do that?

A terminating employee was offered a severance and release agreement. She carefully edited the release section, using the same type font and margins, to change the language from a release “including” various employment laws to the word “excluding” all the laws. She returned the release without any indication of her sneaky change. After pocketing the \$15,000 severance pay, she then sued the company for age discrimination.

The court refused to dismiss the case, in spite of the employee’s deceptive trick. It ruled that she had not waived her rights, and the employer could have seen that before making the payments.

View the complete article at:
<http://www.diversityinc.com/legal-issues/july-legal-roundup-employee-pulls-a-fast-one-to-preserve-discrimination-lawsuit/>

Why Diversity Can Be Bad For Business (And Inclusion Is The Answer)

Sebastian Bailey, Contributor • May 20, 2014

More and more leaders are starting to add Diversity and Inclusion to their strategic agenda, and it’s about time. The benefits of diverse and inclusive teams have been proven both in the laboratory and in organizations...

So why not stick a diversity quota in place and be done with it? Because it’s inclusion that matters. Extensive research shows that diversity alone is damaging for individuals and organizations: research links difference alone to lower revenue, performance, employee morale and wellbeing, along with slower decision making, increased conflict, absenteeism, missed opportunities and more (expensive) discrimination cases. But when coupled with an inclusive culture, diversity delivers higher performance, less absenteeism, more customer satisfaction and greater innovation.

Unfortunately many well-meaning D&I initiatives fail because organizations behave defensively, putting corporate policies in place to increase diversity (appointing a Chief Diversity Officer, setting up diverse candidate slates, implementing flexible working policies) and thus avoid expensive lawsuits, without helping individual employees develop a mindset of inclusion.

View the complete article at:
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastianbailey/2014/05/20/why-we-should-prioritize-the-i-in-d-and-i/>

A bit of HR humor...

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by SCOTT ADAMS

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<http://dilbert.com/>

