

HUMAN RELATIONS PROBLEMS AT KMDT-TV

The case is derived from the original case included in Alan B. Albarran in Management of Electronic and Digital Media (2017). Though real-life details are used to simulate an actual event, the case is entirely fictitious.

KMDT-TV is a television station located in a top-30 market. Part of a group of nine stations, KMDT-TV has operated since 1957 and had enjoyed a long and successful relationship as a CBS affiliate. You were appointed Vice President and General Manager of KMDT-TV about six months ago.

During the past six months, you have come to know your management team as well as most of the station's employees. Overall, you have a good rapport with your managerial team (10 direct reports) and you feel good about your relationship with the 45 full and part-time employees.

Following your regular Tuesday morning meeting with your direct report team, Jane Stovall, the Human Resources Director, asks to speak with you privately. Stovall has been with the station for six years in a variety of capacities and has been in charge of Human Resources for the past two years.

"We have an HR complaint that is serious and needs immediate attention," says Stovall. "It concerns conduct that may be related to sexual harassment." Stovall presents the available facts of the problem:

"The problem concerns the Programming Department. Last week, we hired Bill Campo from our sister station in Every Town, PA as Assistant Program Manager. This was in line with the recommendation of the Mike Hayes (Program Director). Monica Davis, the Programming Staff Assistant, also applied for the role and is now bitter that she did not get the position. Monica is suggesting that Mike passed her over because of a personal relationship that went sour." Puzzled by the comment, you ask Ms. Stovall what she means. Ms. Stovall tells you the following:

All of this happened before you joined the station. About 18 months ago, Mike and his wife were having problems. They separated for about three months. During the separation, Mike and Monica had an affair. The only reason that Mike and Monica's affair became known was a couple of staff members observed them engaging in public displays of affection. Then word moved around quickly.

The previous VP/GM told Mike to end the affair as it was inappropriate, and Mike did so. Mike and his wife subsequently reconciled and began counseling. Apparently, Mike's marriage is holding up pretty well," says Stovall. "Monica seemed to take things in stride. Monica was and still is single. As far as I know, she has had no other relationships with anyone at the station."

Mike came into my office late yesterday. He claims Monica is threatening to file a sexual harassment complaint against him and the station. She says that during their affair he suggested he would help her get a promotion. Mike denies he ever made any promise about a promotion to Monica during their affair. He said that their affair only lasted about a month, and work was rarely discussed. Until now, there has been no problem with either Mike or Monica in working together despite the affair and Mike's reconciliation with his wife." Ms. Stovall concludes her report:

“Obviously, this matter needs immediate attention. Because of the damaging nature of the complaint, we could be faced with legal action involving sexual harassment in the workplace. My feeling is the problems can be resolved with some decisive action. How do you want to handle the situation?”

KMDT-TV’s corporate code of conduct prohibits sexual relationships between a manager and their direct report. As the Vice President and General Manager, you must act on this allegation of Sexual Harassment.

THE ASSIGNMENT:

Instructions: Review the EEOC’s Sexual Harassment Facts. Discuss the assignment within the team and develop a team response. Develop a written response to the questions below. Include the group’s name, individual names, course and section. Submit the response at the end of the class case discussion.

QUESTIONS:

1. What actions must you take to resolve Monica’s allegation of sexual harassment? Why?
2. What would be the likely responses to those actions from Monica, Mike and Bill?