

Pregnant Woman Fired by Text Message: "Sorry . . . But It's Not Going to Work Out"

By [Jeff Nowak](#)



File this in the "Managers really can be idiots" folder.

Kameisha applied for a job at Jersey Mike's Subs (which by the way, makes an incredible #13 Original Italian sub). At the time she interviewed for a position, Kameisha was four months pregnant. Fearing she would not get the job if she revealed her pregnancy, Kameisha chose not to inform the manager, Marcos, of her exciting personal news during the interview.

As the story goes, she got the job, and after putting in a few days' work, Kameisha informed Marcos that she was pregnant. She also made clear that she needed her job to take care of herself and her new baby. In other words, she was dedicated to the Jersey Mike's cause.

Marcos responded by text, and here's what he said:

Hello, I'm sorry to inform you but it's not going to workout with Jersey Mikes. It's not a good time for us to have someone who is leaving for maternity leave in several months anyways. You also failed to tell me this during our interview. Good luck to [you].

What in the holy hell?

According to a [local news station](#), Marcos resigned his employment. Although she's been offered her old job back, Kameisha declined. But after posting the text message on Facebook, she's made it clear she plans to sue.

Ouch. Would you blame her for doing so?

Insights for Employers

There are plenty of lessons here for employers.

1. **The Interview.** The text is awful, *god awful*. The sentiment behind it even worse. But let me start with the manager's comment, "You also failed to tell me [of your pregnancy] during our interview." I hear this from time to time from clients who are peeved after extending an offer to a candidate who shortly thereafter informs my client that she's pregnant. Why don't they just come clean during the interview, my clients want to know.

Well, I tell them, because they're worried about guys like Marcos.

I *wish* this were a world where candidates could disclose their pregnancies during the interview process so that both sides could have a meaningful, supportive conversation about how the pregnancy and time off after childbirth will be accommodated and this joyous occasion celebrated. But this ain't Utopia. Sadly, there are some managers like Marcos out there who ruin it for the rest of us.

Marcos' reaction about the interview is a guide to the rest of us. The candidate has no obligation to tell us she's pregnant, nor are we allowed to ask. For good reason. So, don't hold it against her when she later informs you of her pregnancy. Respond with joy and support. Take it a step further and share how excited you were when you had your first child and what a blessing it was in your life. In the moment, don't be afraid to be vulnerable, too. Then, work hard to figure out how you will accommodate the maternity leave, not simply because oodles of states now require it, but simply because you're a good boss.

As a result, I'm willing to bet more times than not this employee will go to the wall for you to make the best damn #13 Italian original sub your customers have ever tasted.

2. **Employees Should Have a Clear Path to Complain.** My friend, [Jon Hyman](#), who beat me to the punch in [blogging about this incident on his fabulous employment blog](#), argues that more training isn't necessarily the answer here. Jon's point:

If a manager does not know that you can't fire a woman because she's pregnant, no amount of training in the world is going to help that manager not discriminate.

Just as important, Jon argues, is that employees should have a clear path to complain about incidents like these. When they don't, they resort to posting this kind of stuff on Facebook. This makes sense. During employee orientation and regularly thereafter, employers must put front and center its stand against workplace discrimination and harassment, ensure employees know precisely how to report discrimination or harassment internally, and then back this up with a quick and effective response to their report.

3. **Training Still is Important.** I agree with Jon that "training won't fix stupid." But don't throw training out the window. Please, please, please train your employees on how to effectively and lawfully respond to an employee informing you of a pregnancy or for a leave of absence for a medical reason. Included in this training, of course, should include as stern a warning possible against any comments of the kind above. Train them on how they interact with employees in precisely these situations so they understand your expectations, despite some of their wayward tendencies. Investing a couple hundred bucks now to conduct effective training will maximize your chances of saving tens of thousands when the real life Jersey Mike's situation presents itself.