

Ikea's clash between brand identity, ideologies and employees' values

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The authors prepared this case solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. Although based on real events and despite occasional references to actual companies, this case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

Management decision

After the occurrence of dismissing Tomasz K. Ikea published a press release on its Polish website explaining what had occurred. They wrote that their values build upon the freedom of opinion, tolerance and respect for every employee but that they do not accept infringing behaviour in the name of religion. Furthermore, they mention that several employees were offended and upset by the man's comments. They continue to write that they would take similar actions if another group would be infringed. Ikea emphasizes the fact that it was not the opinions that were the problem but the way to express an opinion by infringing other people. More specifically, it was written:

(he) used quotes from the Old Testament about death and blood in the context of what fate homosexual people should meet (...) Many employees concerned by this entry contacted our HR department (...) Ikea is an open-minded company. Among us are people of various beliefs, including many Catholics. We respect each other, our views and religions. Everyone has the right to be themselves, feel safe and be treated on an equal footing, with respect, like any other employee(Newsweek, 2019).

Annika Mohlin, the media relations manager of Ingka group, says that Ikea is not the right place to work at if you do not share those values. Jakob Holmström who is the communications manager for Ikea Sweden also commented that he feels safe with the fact that no matter where in the world Ikea operates, it will live and act in view of their values. No matter what the local conditions look like, Ikea will assure that all employees have the same rights and opportunities, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, nationality and religion. On July 4, Ikea said that it would not comment any further on the topic since it could have a negative impact of the situation on employees. Further, on its polish webpage, it stated that misinterpretation of the whole situation and the message had reached such a wide scale, so that Ikea had decided to hand over the assessment to appointed entities. In October, the president of the network Carolina Garcia Gomez argued that there were no signs of boycott and that Ikea's sales were steady after this incident. However, the investigation on whether Ikea discriminates Catholics in Poland is still ongoing.

Newsweek. (2019). Ikea Sued by Worker Fired for Posting Anti-Gay Bible Quotes, Attacking 'Promotion of Homosexuality', Available Online: <https://www.newsweek.com/ikea-poland-lgbt-lawsuit-1447954> [Accessed 28 February 2020].