

“that’s what she said”

a ford & harrison blog about the popular television series “the office”

Promotion and Self-Promotion

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Litigation Value: No liability to Dunder Mifflin/Sabre, but plenty of room for improvement in behavior, as always.

In the second week of Season 7 of The Office, Sabre miraculously escaped without an obvious lawsuit. For this shocking development, I’m inclined to credit the fact that Michael Scott spent most of the episode locked in the break room, being counseled by HR manager Toby Flenderson and unable to wreak havoc on the rest of the business.

Now although this counseling arrangement hasn’t led to catastrophe (yet), I think it’s an absolutely terrible idea. No matter how qualified Toby is, and I think we can all agree that with a degree in social work and time spent in a seminary he is qualified, Michael hates him. I was amazed that Toby was as successful as he was, considering that Michael sincerely believes Toby is his arch-nemesis.

And even though Michael isn’t Toby’s boss — if the previous HR structure, with Toby reporting to corporate, remained the same after Sabre’s purchase — Michael is everyone else’s boss and needs to maintain some authority around the office. (Stop laughing, that wasn’t a joke.) Even though Michael’s counseling was ordered because of that whole spanking incident, it should take place outside the office and be performed by someone who doesn’t have to interact with him on a daily basis. (I was going to say “work” with Michael, but . . .)

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But that's a side issue. The real issue that I want to talk about today is Pam's self-promotion. Pam has evidently realized what the rest of us have known for awhile — she is terrible at sales. I have to say, I didn't see this story line coming. I figured Pam would ask Jim to teach her to improve her sales, and various shenanigans would ensue. Instead, Pam decided to take a less traditional approach to her career development: She made up a new position, appointed herself "office administrator," and started telling everyone about her "new job."

I wouldn't advise this method of getting promoted.

For a while, I thought Pam was going to get away with her deception. She turned on the charm, got the "department heads" to sign a form for her, and seemed to have Gabe convinced that this was a long-standing arrangement from pre-Sabre days.

To his credit, Gabe eventually figured the whole thing out. But after calling Pam out, Gabe was unwilling to take the next step and actually say the words, "Pam, you're lying." He also wasn't willing to report her to corporate. As a result, Pam now has a new job, with a salary, and has escaped from the tyrannical commission structure in the sales department.

I don't see any liability to Sabre here, but I think Pam may have committed a teensy bit of fraud. (Maybe Ryan is rubbing off on her?) She made a misrepresentation, Sabre relied on her misrepresentation, and the company now is paying her \$41,500 as an office administrator.

Sabre may not actually have a claim, since Gabe ultimately went along with the scheme and arguably lent some legitimacy to Pam's "promotion." But Jo would certainly have grounds to fire Pam — and probably Gabe, too — if she catches on. You can't have employees making up jobs for themselves and then just taking them (as much as I admire a go-getter). And you can't have your management structure allowing these hijinks to go on for the low price of a name plate that says "Gabe Lewis."

But then again, without hijinks, this really wouldn't be Dunder Mifflin. Maybe Gabe is starting to fit in after all.

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