

## **FIRED FOR BEING TOO ATTRACTIVE**

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### **SYNOPSIS**

Dr. James Knight had a small dental practice. One of his employees, Melissa Nelson, had worked for the facility for approximately ten years. Dr. Knight and Nelson became quite close and shared with each other a lot of personal information and even at times made comments about their sex lives. Dr. Knight's wife also was an employee at the dental office and she suspected that her husband might be having an affair with Nelson. When Mrs. Knight learned that her husband and Nelson had been texting one another while he was out of town on a trip, she demanded that he terminate Nelson's employment. Dr. Knight complied with his wife's demands and discharged Nelson. She subsequently filed sex discrimination charges in an Iowa District Court. Dr. Knight knew he needed to contact his attorney to discuss whether they could win the case and if so how.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this case are:

1. To describe and understand the legal concepts of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and employment-at-will.
2. To analyze and apply case information to the concepts of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and employment-at-will.
3. To describe the role of a state's Civil Rights Commission following its receipt of a complaint of sex discrimination such as the one filed by Melissa Nelson.
4. To evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Melissa Nelson's claims that she was the victim of sex discrimination and to decide how they would rule if they were the judge in this case.
5. To identify and decide what alternative courses of behavior could have been taken and what the implications were if the key player had not taken the action he had, and the ramifications of his decision for other stakeholders.
6. To differentiate between the concepts of what is fair and what is legal.

### **APPLICATION**

This is a decision case and deals with Equal Employment Opportunity including sex discrimination and sexual harassment, and also addresses the role of a state's civil rights commission and the common law doctrine of employment-at-will. This case may be used in an undergraduate or graduate Human Resources Management or Employment Legislation course.

### **KEY WORDS**

Sex discrimination, sexual harassment, employment-at-will, and employee discipline and discharge

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