

#HasJustineLandedYet

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Justine Sacco is a former Public Relations executive for IAC (Stelter, 2013). Sacco was the head of corporation communications at IAC (Stelter, 2013). Before her flight from London to Africa, she tweeted: “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!” (Stelter, 2013) The tweet sparked outrage on Twitter and caused #HasJustineLandedYet to trend worldwide (Stelter, 2013).

Before Sacco landed, another communications specialist at IAC tweeted: “This is an outrageous, offensive comment that does not reflect the views and values of IAC. Unfortunately, the employee in question is unreachable on an international flight, but this is a very serious matter and we are taking appropriate action” (Stelter, 2013).

After Sacco’s termination at IAC, the company released another statement: “The offensive comment does not reflect the views and values of IAC. We take this issue very seriously, and have parted ways with the employee in question. There is no excuse for the hateful statements that have been made and we condemn them unequivocally. We hope, however, that time and action, and the forgiving human spirit, will not result in the wholesale condemnation of an individual who we have otherwise known to be a decent person at core” (Stelter, 2013).

Sacco released a statement to CNN following her termination from IAC: “Words cannot express how sorry I am, and how necessary it is for me to apologize to the people of South Africa, who I have offended due to a needless and careless tweet. There is an AIDS crisis taking place in this country, that we read about in America, but do not live with or face on a continuous basis.

Unfortunately, it is terribly easy to be cavalier about an epidemic that one has never witnessed firsthand” (Stelter, 2013).

I believe that IAC handled the situation perfectly. They “parted ways” with Sacco and gracefully explained that her tweets did “not reflect the views and values of IAC” (Stelter, 2013). They also

let her go on a good note by saying, “We hope, however, that time and action, and the forgiving human spirit, will not result in the wholesale condemnation of an individual who we have otherwise known to be a decent person at core” (Stelter, 2013).

I remember when this case first happened almost two years ago. At the time, reading the last part of their statement made me think that they must have some good people working for them, because many companies would not have acknowledged anything good that they had seen in her. They would have just let the public know that the employee had been let go, and said whatever they needed to say in order to “save face” for the company.

I would not have done anything differently if I were the spokesperson of IAC. I think the situation was handled gracefully and tactfully. Both of the statements seemed as if a lot of thought and consideration had gone into them.

I also thought it was a good idea that they issued a short statement before Sacco landed (Stelter, 2013). They let the public know that they did not agree with the employee’s tweets, and that they could not reach her because the employee was on an international flight, but that they were handling the situation (Stelter, 2013). I think both statements released by IAC were very appropriate.

REFERENCES

Stelter, B. (2013, December 22). Ashamed: Ex-PR exec Justine Sacco Apologizes for AIDS in Africa Tweet. *CNN*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/22/world/sacco-offensive-tweet/index.html>