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The World According To Trump: Executives Behaving Badly

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After the watershed election of last week, many people's emotions are in overdrive. Sadly, some people go too far and unfortunately, some of those people are company executives. Consider the following tweets from the CEO of tech company PacketSled:

- "I'm going to kill the President [] elect."
- "Bring it secret service."
- "Getting a sniper rifle and perching myself where it counts. Find a bedroom in the whitehouse that suits you motherf***er. I'll find you."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the company dismissed the CEO in the wake of these tweets. (Read more about this here.) Less overtly confrontational is an election night message from the CEO of GrubHub, who was so upset over the results of the election that he wrote a memo to his employees about inclusion and tolerance in the workplace. Struggling with the outcome of the election, he stated that he absolutely rejected the politics of the president-elect and added: "If you do not agree with this statement then please reply to this email with your resignation because you have no place here. We do not tolerate hateful attitudes on our team." (Read the company press release here.)

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In the wake of this statement, many commentators wondered if demanding the resignation of those who held different political views was consistent with the company's professed value of inclusion in the workplace. Thereafter, the CEO clarified that his statement had been "misconstrued" and that he was not actually calling on anyone who voted for the president-elect to resign. Perhaps so, but if anyone did vote for him, would they still feel welcome at the company? Employers – including CEOs – are people and act as emotionally as anyone else. Sending spur-of-the-moment messages in the wake of a bitterly contested election campaign where your preferred candidate lost (or gloating that your preferred candidate won) is probably not the best idea. Unfortunately, technology and social media make this very easy. Business leaders, managers and supervisors need to curb these tendencies. For one thing, it may be illegal: Some states (such as Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Washington) have laws that prohibit discrimination against employees based on their political affiliation, or from unduly influencing an employee's vote through intimidation. Second, as seen in the case of GrubHub, it can damage company morale and may lead to unwanted bad press.

All in all, better to wait and think about the statement before rolling it out on a whim. Let me close with praise where praise is due. Earlier this week, a political dispute over the election broke out on a United Airlines plane while it was parked at the gate before heading to Puerta Vallarta. Obviously not interested in listening to bickering among the passengers for several hours and trying to diffuse the situation, the pilot got on the public address system and said the following: We're gonna be in a metal tube at 35,000 feet . . . I understand everybody has their opinions, that's fine. If you support him, great. If you don't, I understand. However, we're out here to go to Puerta Vallarta to have a good time. Let cooler heads prevail and we can talk and realize that we're all human beings, and we all can stick together and we can all feel for this country in our own way and that's what we should do. If there's anybody that has a problem with this . . . there's another flight tomorrow. You're not gonna be on this one. Reports are that the pilot's statement was greeted with applause and cheering from the passengers on the plane. Hear, hear.