

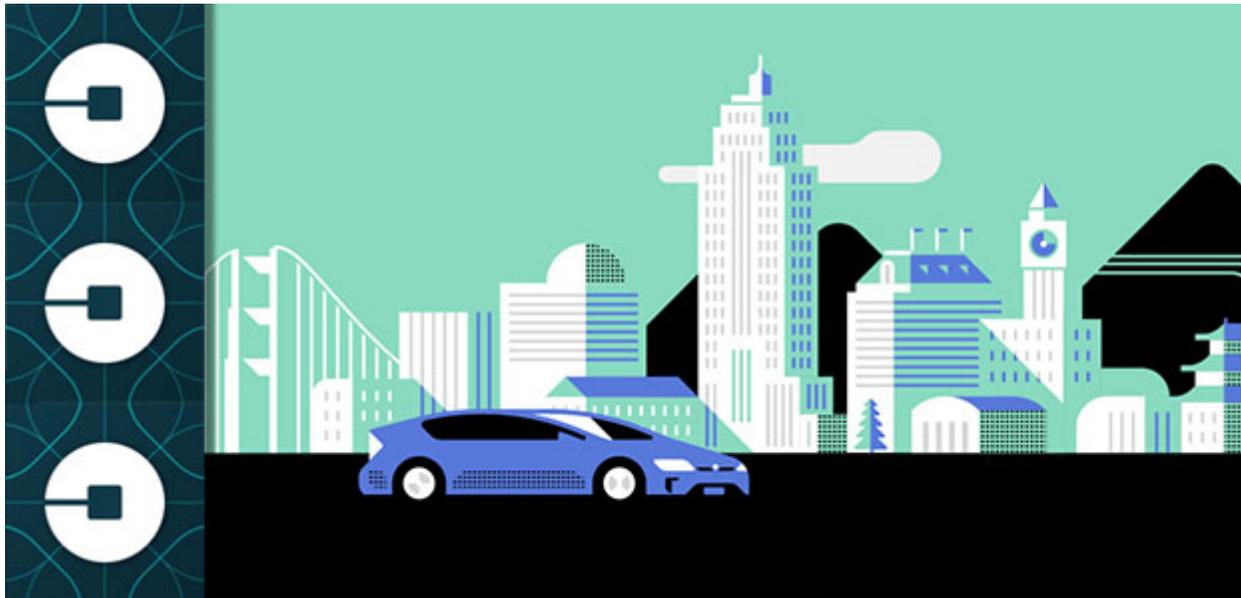
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Uber Wants Fleeing Customers to Know It's Hurting

By David Jones

Feb 23, 2017 9:33 AM PT

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Uber has been responding to recent requests to delete customer accounts with a statement that claims "everyone at Uber is deeply hurting" and "it's everyone's number one priority to create change in the coming months and years."



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4:55 PM - 22 Feb 2017

UBER

RESOLVED

DELETE MY UBER ACCOUNT

Sorry to hear that you wish to delete your account, Cameron. Let us assist you here.

Everyone at Uber is deeply hurting after reading Susan Fowler's blog post. What she describes is abhorrent and against everything Uber stands for and believes in. Eric Holder, former US Attorney General under President Obama, and Tammy Albarran, both partners at the leading law firm Covington & Burling, will conduct an independent review into the specific issues relating to the workplace environment raised by Susan Fowler, as well as diversity and inclusion at Uber more broadly. We believe in creating a workplace where a deep sense of justice underpins everything we do and it's everyone's number one priority to create change in the coming months and years.

In line with your request, we've already marked your account to be deleted. Please bear in mind that we cannot recover your account after it has been deleted.

We appreciate your understanding regarding this matter. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you need anything else.

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The pop-up statement, which Twitter users began circulating on Wednesday, appears to be Uber's latest effort to stem the flow of customers from the company, which has come under fire for ignoring sexual harassment complaints detailed in a [blog post](#) published by a former engineer last weekend.

Uber CEO Travis Kalanick earlier this week issued a memo to employees saying that former Attorney General Eric Holder had been retained to investigate the claims by the former employee, Susan J. Fowler, who left the firm last year.

Holder and Tammy Albarran, partners in [Covington & Burling](#), will conduct an independent review into Fowler's allegations, Kalanick said.

Arianna Huffington, founder of *The Huffington Post* and a board member at Uber, will participate in the probe, as will Liane Hornsey, Uber's recently hired chief human resources officer, and Angela Padilla, associate general counsel at Uber.

In her lengthy post, Fowler detailed how her allegations of sexual harassment against a manager were dismissed with only a warning given to her "high performing" manager, and how she was told to either change departments or stay on the team and expect to get a poor performance review.

Cave Mentality

Fowler also wrote of a larger problem within Uber's upper management, where a "Game of Thrones" style of competition led to managers competing to undermine the people they reported to while simultaneously fighting with each other.

The culture created a climate in which work projects were abandoned, organizational priorities changed day to day, and little was getting done within the company, she claimed.

"We all lived under fear that our teams would be dissolved, there would be another re-org and we'd have to start on yet another new project with an impossible deadline," Fowler wrote. "It was an organization in complete, unrelenting chaos."

She said her attempts to transfer to another department were blocked.

Fowler reported several other instances of gender discrimination, including a move to block the remaining half-dozen women in the organization from receiving leather jackets. She was given poor performance reviews and threatened with termination before she found a new job and left of her own accord.

The CEO issued a statement, after reading Fowler's blog, saying it was the first time he had heard of the allegations and that what she described was "abhorrent and against everything Uber stands for and believes in."

Kalanick said he would instruct his new Chief Human Resources Officer Liane Hornsey to "conduct an urgent investigation" into the claims. "We seek to make Uber a just workplace and there can be absolutely no place for this kind of behavior at Uber-- and anyone who behaves this way or thinks this is OK will be fired."

In his memo to employees, the CEO noted that 15.1 percent of Uber's engineering, product management and scientists are women, in contrast to rival Silicon Valley firms. However, the company later issued amended figures, noting that females occupied 17 percent of such positions at Facebook, 19 percent at Google, and 15 percent at Twitter.

Uber will issue a more comprehensive diversity report in the coming months, Kalanick said.

Huffington said that she joined Kalanick and Hornsey for more than an hour long discussion of women in the workplace during an employee meeting.

"Travis spoke very honestly about mistakes he's made," Huffington said, adding that she felt a "responsibility to hold the leadership team's feet to the fire on this issue."

Cultural Affairs

The sexual harassment scandal marks the latest diversity-related blemish on Uber, which last month came under fire for Kalanick's agreement to participate in the Trump administration's business advisory council.

Anger against the company flared when Uber drivers crossed the line at John F. Kennedy International Airport, after New York taxi drivers launched a wildcat work stoppage to protest the president's disastrous travel ban on refugees and travelers from seven majority Muslim nations.

Kalanick resigned from the council amid the backlash over Trump's immigration policies.

The new scandal appears to be an example of corporate leadership being unable to walk the fine line between driving profitability and creating an inclusive culture.

"Uber's predicament is a reminder that the line between being perceived as a leading-edge innovator and a tone-deaf jerk is exceedingly thin, Charles King, principal analyst at [Pund-IT](#), told the E-Commerce Times.

"These allegations fit Uber's pattern of ignoring rules and disregarding basic workers rights," maintained Derecka Mehrens, executive director of Working Partnerships USA and cofounder of Silicon Valley Rising.

"Uber must stop placing profits over people and take real steps to respect all of its workers and the communities in which it operates," she added.

"This could be bad," remarked Tom Spiggle, founder of [The Spiggle Law Firm](#).

"To begin with, this woman had a double-barrel claim: first for the sexual harassment, then for the company's failure to resolve the issue when she raised it with HR, which essentially punished her for raising the problem," he told the E-Commerce Times.

"Second, this could be a systemic problem for Uber," Spiggle said, "as it sounds like she was not the only woman to experience this." [EOT](#)

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