

A former TikTok executive sues the company, alleging gender and age discrimination

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The icon for the video sharing TikTok app is seen on a smartphone, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa. A former TikTok executive is alleging she was retaliated against and fired from her position because the company's China-based owners determined she "lacked the docility and meekness" required of female employees, Friday, Feb. 9, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File

A former TikTok executive has filed a lawsuit against the social media platform, alleging she was retaliated against and fired from her position because the company's owners in China determined she "lacked the docility and meekness" required of female employees.

Katie Puris, who was the Global Head of Brand & Creative at TikTok, alleged in a lawsuit filed this week in a Manhattan federal court that she was fired in 2022 after making internal complaints about gender and age discrimination linked to what she called a preference among [company executives](#) for hiring [young people](#).

According to the complaint, Puris also reported an incident of sexual harassment at an off-site TikTok event, which she says the company didn't respond to appropriately and led her to miss a TikTok event that the alleged harasser was expected to attend.

Both TikTok and its parent company ByteDance in Beijing, which is listed as a defendant, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the lawsuit, Puris' attorneys claim she was given positive performance reviews after joining TikTok in late 2019 and was eventually invited to participate in bi-weekly meetings with ByteDance's chairman Lidong Zhang the following year.

The lawsuit claims Zhang was displeased with the presentations Puris gave "because she celebrated her team's successes and achievements, which he felt was inappropriate because he believes that women should always remain humble and express modesty." Puris alleges the company eventually began micromanaging her team and recommending their projects for cancellation.

Furthermore, the complaint states during a leadership meeting in 2021

where Puris was in attendance, Yiming Zhang, ByteDance's CEO at the time, said he would rather hire a young inexperienced person because [older people](#) are "less willing to change, less innovative and slower."

The [lawsuit](#) says Puris, who was nearing 50 at the time, expressed her concerns to the head of global human resources at TikTok. The company attributed her firing to "performance reasons," the complaint said.

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