

Pierce - Bullwer

Confidential Information for Supervisor

Participants: Director
Receptionist

Summary

The director has been the receptionist's supervisor for three years at ERG, a consulting firm with 60 employees. ERG advises companies about what to pay their executives and how to handle tax and cost of living questions while overseas. The receptionist greets clients when they arrive at the office and refers them to appropriate staff. The two have had a decent working relationship, and the director has been very pleased with the receptionist's work.

The director is a 55-year-old conservative businessperson. The receptionist is 20 years old and enjoys alternative music and going to clubs. In the last two months, the receptionist has had piercing of the nose, tongue and left eyebrow and wears gold studs in each place. The director has expressed disapproval about the receptionist's appearance, but the receptionist feels strongly about the right to self-expression. When the receptionist suggested they try mediation, the director agreed.

Director's perspective

This receptionist has been a good employee for three years. S/he has an ability to make people feel welcome and comfortable when visiting the firm. Notwithstanding, you feel that the facial piercing and jewelry have been a distraction to both staff and clients. The talk around the water tank is what will be pierced next? Three major clients have mentioned the bizarre appearance of the receptionist.

The company has a clause in its mission statement and employee handbook that reads, "Employees must prepare and present themselves in such a way that will earn the client's trust".

Your position is that the receptionist must remove the facial and tongue jewelry while at work or leave the firm. You don't want to go to court over this. One employee's personal style preferences simply shouldn't interfere with the business. Employees can wear anything they like when out of the office, but you can't take the chance of losing your current clients and not gaining new clients because of your receptionist's appearance.

You're hoping you can use this mediation to talk some sense into the young receptionist before this costs them their job.