

Ernst & Young Accused of Failing to Act on Groping Complaint

 [bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-18/ernst-young-partner-complains-of-harassment-at-conference](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-18/ernst-young-partner-complains-of-harassment-at-conference)

A partner in Ernst & Young Global Limited's tax division says she was sexually harassed by colleagues, including one who groped her in front of other employees at the Walt Disney World Resort.

Jessica Casucci was at a dueling piano restaurant called Jellyrolls at the resort in June 2015 when another partner, John Martinkat, "groped and squeezed Ms. Casucci's rear end with both hands," "grabbed and aggressively squeezed her breasts," and then propositioned her, according to a complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and obtained by Bloomberg. The outing was during an Ernst & Young conference in Orlando, Florida, she said.

Over the past year almost every industry has been forced to reckon with sexual harassment and gender discrimination, following revelations from dozens of actresses recounting decades of sexual misconduct at the hands of Harvey Weinstein, sparking the #MeToo movement -- a social media designation that aims to show how widespread sexual harassment is.

Ernst & Young, one of the big four accounting firms, says it understands the importance of diversity and inclusion in its workforce. Its CEO Mark Weinberger said in January that "diversity and inclusion is a big social issues today and really important to all of us." For at least the past five years, the firm has been ranked as one of the top 10 companies to work for by DiversityInc. It has about 45,000 employees in the U.S.

"EY is committed to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment of any kind," spokesman John La Place said in a statement. The firm is "thoroughly investigating" new information brought to its attention on April 13, 2018, and an "individual who is the subject of the charge has been placed on administrative leave pending the completion of the investigation."

La Place didn't specify what the information was or the identify of the individual.

"We take all allegations of sexual harassment seriously," La Place said. "Once we conclude our investigation, strong disciplinary actions will be taken against anyone we determine to have violated our policies and/or our Code of Conduct."

Martinkat didn't respond to emailed and phone requests for comment.

Casucci claims after Martinkat assaulted her, he followed up with numerous lewd text messages and emails, even after she "unequivocally rejected Mr. Martinkat's advances." Casucci said she was subjected to unwanted comments from other male colleagues as well,

including one who asked if she was wearing underwear, and another who "regularly stared at women's rear ends."

When Casucci reported the incident involving Martinkat to human resources, she was told to "trust the firm" to take it seriously, according to the complaint.

"As it turned out, EY did not take the matter seriously," she said in the complaint.

Martinkat received "little or no discipline" for his behavior, while Casucci was forced to abandon client relationships to avoid working with him, she claims.

In 2017, 46 percent of EY's U.S. employees were women, according to data the accounting firm provided to Bloomberg. Thirty-one percent of workers promoted to the partner or principal level in the U.S. were women. Less than a third of the company's U.S. executive committee are women, or five out of 17 people.

"In this day and age, when a woman shows the courage to stand up and complain about physical sexual harassment at work, one would expect her complaint to be treated with the utmost care and urgency," said Michael Willemin, a lawyer for Casucci, in a statement. "Sadly, Ernst & Young, the third-largest accounting firm in the world, did not treat Ms. Casucci's complaint this way, and her career was seriously damaged as a result."