

# Luxury Mattress Brand Hästens Forced Hypnotherapy, ‘Spiritual Coaching’ on Workers, Lawsuit Alleges

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March 31, 2021

A former employee of luxury mattress manufacturer Hästens filed a lawsuit against the company on Wednesday, alleging its CEO fostered a “deeply misogynistic and sexist work culture” and pushed his bizarre spiritual beliefs on staff, including mandatory hypnotherapy.

In the lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court, Lizandra Vega claims that after joining the company in January 2020 as an executive recruiter she endured sexual harassment, wage disparity, and a “vile and disturbing” work culture driven by CEO Jan Ryde. When she spoke out, Vega said she was met with “immediate retaliation and her subsequent termination” on Jan. 7.

Her suit, which lists Hästens and Ryde as defendants, asks for a jury trial and “an award of punitive damages.”

“Hästens’ policing of its employees’ spiritual beliefs is a brazen abuse of corporate power that falls far outside the bounds of lawful employment practices. Forcing employees to undergo spiritual coaching, assessments by a ‘clairvoyant hypnotist’ on payroll, psychological manipulation—these are not the hallmarks of a safe or lawful work environment,” Jeanne M. Christensen, Vega’s lawyer, said in a statement.

“The company’s willingness to blatantly retaliate against Ms. Vega for standing up to workplace gender discrimination suggests that Hästens is not nearly as ‘enlightened’ as it claims. We look forward to holding Hästens accountable for these disturbing and unlawful practices,” she added.

Hästens did not immediately respond to The Daily Beast’s request for comment.

The Swedish mattress brand is world-famous, boasting celebrity clients like the Swedish royal family, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and rapper Drake. It was also featured in the Netflix series *Emily in Paris*, and there’s currently a waiting list of people willing to shell out \$400,000 for one of its beds.

Vega’s lawsuit claims that while the brand touts staying “one step ahead of the lifestyle curve,” its business practices are behind the times, with Ryde exhibiting “ubiquitous profanity” as well as “unprofessional and unlawful conduct” around his employees.

On a Jan. 31 zoom call with more than 114 employees, Ryde slammed employees who were not on camera, saying “all the losers who have their screen off—fuck off or open up your screens. You’re either in or you’re out,” the lawsuit alleges.

The CEO also tried to control his employees' spirituality by forcing them to be evaluated by a personal team of "mindset coaches"—including hypnotists and "high-frequency vibration" individuals, the lawsuit states.

Workers were allegedly told to study "the law of attraction," spiral dynamics, the David Hawkins' Scale of Enlightenment, and *The Four Agreements*, a self-help book. Ryde also employed Gregory Downey, described as his "right-hand man, personal adviser, and mindset coach," to teach employees how to properly follow these belief systems.

"Vega was expected to use this same matrix of belief systems to source and recruit executive talent," the lawsuit states. "To force employees to use such a subjective and mystical approach to executive recruiting was a recipe for disaster—especially since Ms. Vega was told to disregard resumes and candidates' past work experience in order to recruit people that were 'cooler,' 'younger,' 'more authentic,' or that had 'enough self-love' and 'abundance.'"

Employees also had to submit to assessments on their vibrational frequencies and "light" from Peter Von Ah, "a clairvoyant and hypnotist on the Hästens company payroll," the lawsuit states. Vega said she and other employees were forced to attend daily mindset sessions by Downey.

Her lawsuit also claims Ryde and other male executives exhibited sexist and disturbing behavior. One example was on Nov. 16, 2020, when Ryde sent 18 of his top employees, including Vega, an email with an expletive-laden video.

"Disgustingly the video contains footage of a lion killing live prey," the lawsuit states. "Under the pretense of being a 'sales training' video, the narrator compares salespeople to lions and comments that the male lion had to make the kill because he 'got tired' of waiting for the female lion to do it."

The video was sent even after Marybeth Gregg, the global head of Human Resources, complained to Downey about a similarly disturbing training tape, according to the lawsuit. When Gregg made a second complaint about the November video, she was allegedly "mysteriously banished and excommunicated" from Hästens and "Vega and other employees were forbidden" from contacting her.

After Von Ah determined that Gregg had "very low vibrations," she was forced to take time off to "reflect" and become "fully transparent," the lawsuit says.

Vega also complained about the November video, at which point she was "suddenly and inexplicably" excluded "from all of [Ryde's] email communications going forward," she claims.

On Jan. 7, Vega was fired, with executives allegedly telling her she was no longer keeping up with their vision of recruitment. But knowing the legal provisions in her contract, "Hästens seized upon the horror of Covid-19 and in a sham conditional offer" said she would not be

fired if she traveled to New York City three days a week to work at a WeWork, according to the lawsuit. Her salary, however, would still be reduced by 50 percent.

“Outraged, Ms. Vega, who had been performing work from home, asked why it was necessary for her to travel to a WeWork office in the middle of a pandemic when rates of infection were spiking and city leaders repeatedly urged individuals to stay home unless absolutely necessary,” the lawsuit states. Hästens allegedly told her that she needed to go in-person to “train her eventual replacement.”

When she refused again, she was fired for the second time on Jan. 26.