

Amazon Hires Outside Firm to Investigate Internal Discrimination

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- Move follows report of employee petition alleging unfairness
- Cloud computing arm also faces lawsuits from several employees

Amazon.com Inc. is investigating reports of toxic employee behavior in its cloud-computing unit, a move that follows an internal petition from employees claiming systemic harassment, bullying and bias against women and underrepresented groups.

Amazon Web Services Chief Executive Officer Adam Selipsky last week emailed the authors of the petition, saying Amazon had retained an outside firm to investigate inappropriate conduct. Amazon also faces lawsuits from current and former employees alleging discrimination in the workplace.

“I share your passion for ensuring that our workplace is inclusive and free of bias and unfair treatment,” Selipsky wrote. “I can tell you we are committed to that outcome, as well as to specifically investigating any incident or practice that is inappropriate.”

The petition was signed by hundreds of employees and alleged that Amazon’s processes to investigate discrimination claims are not fair, according to the Washington Post, which reported the probe earlier Friday. Amazon’s system is “set up to protect the company and the status quo, rather than the employees filing the complaints,” the newspaper reported.

An Amazon spokesman didn’t comment on the petition beyond Selipsky’s note.

Several current and former employees -- including a few who worked at AWS -- sued Amazon earlier this year, alleging harassment, discrimination and retaliation. Amazon has said it was investigating the allegations and had found some to be unsubstantiated.

Selipsky earlier this month took the reins of AWS from Andy Jassy, who turned the cloud-computing division into an Amazon profit machine and is now CEO of the entire company.