



Portfolio Media, Inc. | 111 West 19th Street, 5th floor | New York, NY 10011 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Akamai Sales Worker Harassed, Assaulted On Job, Suit Says

By **Grace Elletson**

Law360 (July 27, 2023, 2:45 PM EDT) -- Akamai Technologies threatened a senior account executive with termination over sexist sales quota expectations after she endured years of harassment that included sexual assault by a client in a taxi, she told a New York federal court.

Andrea Riggs slapped the technology company with a **sex bias and retaliation lawsuit** Wednesday, accusing the company of violating New York state and New York City human rights laws. Riggs said that she routinely faced sexist and sexual comments in the workplace and that she was groped by a client and shoved by a male colleague.

"Despite the alcohol-soaked, 'boys' club' atmosphere, Riggs was a remarkably successful employee for the technology company," her complaint said. "But none of her accomplishments could save Riggs' job. In December 2022, the company hired another woman into Riggs' group and shortly thereafter told Riggs that she had to leave."

Riggs said she began her career at the Massachusetts-based company in 2013 and later became a senior strategic account executive. Akamai has offices around the globe, employs almost 10,000 workers and hosts a content delivery network that serves some of the largest banks, streaming services and software companies in the world, according to its website.

Riggs said she achieved considerable success in the role — she received the company's renowned Titan award twice and is a seven-time member of Akamai's 100% Club, made up of those who reach 100% of their sales quotas.

But she said this didn't shield her from a hostile work environment. In 2013, when she was attending a customer conference, several male colleagues took a group of Akamai's customers to a bar, she said. When she attempted to hail a cab after being told she was "ruining the fun" as things began to get sexually charged at the bar, a group of male colleagues piled into the vehicle with her, according to the suit.

One of the men in the cab insisted they fit in one more Akamai customer, who opened the passenger door where Riggs was sitting and proceeded to sit on her lap, the complaint said. The customer then grabbed Riggs' breast so hard he bruised her, she said, while she screamed, "He's grabbing me! He's grabbing me!" as her colleagues laughed. The driver then helped her push him out of the car, she said.

Riggs said she found out later that her male colleagues had recorded the interaction when she passed by a group of co-workers gathered around a desk, laughing at the cellphone video.

"When Riggs approached the men to see what was going on, she realized to her horror that the screams on the recording were her own from the sexual assault," the complaint said.

Another male colleague physically assaulted Riggs during a meetup for drinks at a bar in 2016, according to the suit. She said that when the male colleague made an inappropriate comment toward her, she flicked some droplets from her drink at him. When he said, "Don't you ever do that again," she repeated the action, she said, thinking he was joking.

He then grabbed her by her arms and pushed her up against a wall while screaming at her, Riggs

said. She said her male colleagues who saw the interaction didn't step in to stop the physical assault.

Riggs said she was also subjected to frequent sexist comments. One male colleague told her he couldn't believe the company had hired her because she's a "soccer mom with five kids," according to the suit.

In December 2022, Riggs said, Akamai hired a new female account executive, whom she perceived as her replacement. In January, she said, she was told she wasn't meeting expectations and was criticized for meeting only 90% of her sales quota, even though male colleagues also had not met their quota for the year.

Riggs said she was told she was going to be put on a performance improvement plan, which she was told is viewed as a career death sentence at the company. She said she was told she could take 90 days to look for another job outside the company before she would have to resign. She is still employed by the company.

Attorney Valdi Licul, who represents Riggs, said in a news release provided to Law360 that he looks forward to holding the company accountable.

"No one should have to suffer through verbal and physical sexual humiliation the way Andrea has," Licul said. "Nor should any working mother be denied advancement because of obsolete stereotypes about her capabilities."

An Akamai spokesperson declined to comment.

Riggs is represented by Valdi Licul and Laura E. Edidin of Wigdor LLP.

Counsel information for Akamai Technologies was not yet available.

The case is Andrea Riggs v. Akamai Technologies et al., case number 1:23-cv-06463, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

--Editing by Khalid Adad.