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DEI at Dynamo Relations: The Challenges of Remaining an Inclusive Company

It is March 2022, over two years since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Chicago, and the health crisis had finally subsided enough to give a sense of “back to reality.” This was the context for Imani Furaha, founder of Dynamo Relations Co., at a key decision point regarding the growth of her public relations (PR) and brand management firm.

A huge opportunity required a near-immediate response. Sofia Tempest, the mayor of Chicago, is seeking election as governor of Illinois, and, having hired Dynamo for preliminary campaign work, wants Furaha’s firm to handle PR for the campaign all over the state. In particular, Tempest wants a certain Dynamo employee, Nathaniel (Nate) de Guzman, to take a lead role.

Furaha is well aware that working with Tempest could be great for her company, attracting new clients and boosting Dynamo’s image, especially if Tempest wins the governor’s seat. Also, knowing from experience how difficult it can be for a woman to compete in a primarily male field, she personally wants Tempest to succeed. In addition, this offer could be an excellent opportunity for an employee she strongly wishes to retain, and thus, an example for other valued employees. Yet, a different consideration is keeping Furaha from quickly saying “When do we start?”

De Guzman has a kind of cerebral palsy that limits the movement of the left side of his body. Walking is difficult and often painful, despite the use of a cane. A few years ago, he began to develop hip, back, and joint problems, which in turn led to recurring migraines. During the pandemic work-from-home period, he reported no difficulties, but Furaha is concerned that the whirlwind of on-site activities that Tempest expects for her statewide campaign could significantly impair his health and well-being. Also, under Tempest’s proposal, Dynamo would need to cover the costs of special travel accommodations for de Guzman and then seek reimbursement at the end of the campaign. A third concern also troubled Furaha: She couldn’t seem to dismiss the thought that Tempest might use de Guzman’s visible disability as a way to gain sympathy votes.

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