



Toyota Abandoning Julie Hamp: Missed PR Op, Japan Male Myopia, Power Sharing, or Just Another Diversity Disaster?

How much of the story do we know?

Julie Hamp came to Toyota as head of Global Communications with a great track record from GM & Pepsi. Toyota PR had been run by a white male who held the position for 23 years. He and the PR department seemed to be overwhelmed during the various crisis at Toyota over the years from unintended acceleration to recall mismanagement..

So in comes a bright, experienced female public relations executive and immediately Japan and the male team in Torrance are touting how Toyota finally has renewed diversity and hailed Julie Hamp as the highest ranking female in all of the Toyota organization.

Then, she goes to Japan for meeting with the Japanese management, She has severe pain in her knee such that her family mails her 57 oxycodone pills in desperation. The package was labeled "Jewelry" so the Japan postal authorities opened it. There were pendants in the box with the pills at the bottom.

From there, all reason and fairness were lost and the Japan press & obsessed authorities set out to discredit Julie Hamp with all kinds of backstory content including her \$3 M house, suggesting that there must be something suspicious about all her activities including a Rolex watch gift to her daughter. What this had to do with the case, it is still not clear. BTW, nearly every Toyota executive in the U.S. lives in a \$3M house in Palos Verdes, Orange County, or Manhattan Beach.

Did President Akio Toyoda cop out on the company's diversity policy, showing his true colors about women in management?

What is clear is that Toyota really hasn't changed much in the last 25 years. Further no company, entity, or group has gone to bat for this competent communicator—and definitely not Akio Toyoda, President of Toyota, who essentially threw her under the corporate bus; nor any of the business newspapers, the Japan press, or Toyota's marketing and PR departments, the U.S. government, and most of the white males and Japan shadow management.

How will or has Toyota's PR handled a real PR problem?

It would seem that the Toyota PR machine, U.S. press, Wall Street Journal and --others could have found out, explained, and really made a max effort to get the facts, to find the truths, whys, and real circumstances and set about to support and explain this whole unintended situation. It is still not too late.

Instead they and we stood by and watched this competent women being feed to lions of Japan's paparazzi press and the tradition-bound Japanese male management.

For example, such questions were not answered anywhere by anyone.

Why did Julie Hamp do what she did?

Does she have a severe medical condition that required prescription painkillers?

[She did]

Why did she have so many painkillers? [Because she was going in in Japan for a while]

Was the oxycodone prescribed by her doctor? [Of course]

Why was the oxycodone "mailed"? [She apparently forgot her jewelry & the prescribed pain medication]

What was the real story & the real reason all this happened?

The real question we may never know what really happened might be:

How much was she paid in severance to keep a confidential lid on what really happened? [Estimated to be as much as \$500,000]

These "don't tell or" covenants are common in corporate America, particularly with Asian car companies and have happened to several female executives who have been fired or let go by Asian OEMs.

Corporate lawyers structure binding agreements with fired employees that any and all their severance payouts and benefits are only valid if they say absolutely nothing. So if an executive like Julie Hamp is, in effect, fired-- she must have income or resources til she can get another job or sustain herself and family while she recovers from the shock. -- So the real reason for executive departures never gets revealed or even dealt with.

For whatever reason, to date this matter was not handled right by Toyota, Mr. Toyoda, the Japanese authorities, and the international press corps. Will any of the players be able to find out and reveal real reason for all this unfortunate incident? Not likely.

Will Toyota ever do something about its long standing diversity problem by empowering women to really run things?

If Mr. Toyoda wants to really show that he is concerned about diversity, the corporate image, shareholder earnings, and car sales worldwide, then how about immediately promoting or recruiting a female executive to the # 2 spot in the Toyota org chart and let her be a candidate to replace him?. And being a family member or named Toyoda does not count.



Julie Hamp, Former Global Communications Director, Toyota