Toymaker Settles Suit Accusing CEO Of Harassment, Rape

Mae Anderson, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — German toy maker Steiff has settled an $80 million lawsuit filed in June accusing the company's CEO of conducting a yearslong campaign of unwelcome advances toward a U.S. marketing executive and raping her, a lawyer for the company said Wednesday.

When the lawsuit was filed by Steiff marketing executive Jane Collins in June, CEO Martin Frenchen said the allegations were meritless.

Also at the time, an attorney for the company, David Rosenthal, said it is "committed to providing a safe and comfortable working environment for all of its employees" and would contest Collins' claims.

Rosenthal said the suit was settled Tuesday night "to the satisfaction all the participants" but would not divulge the terms. Steiff company officials did not respond to calls for comment.

Christopher Brennan, an attorney for Jane Collins, did not immediately return calls.

The lawsuit was filed in New York Supreme Court in Manhattan and alleged Frechen raped Collins in 2004 and sexually harassed her during trade shows this winter and in 2007.

At the time the lawsuit was filed, Collins remained assistant marketing manager at Steiff's North American arm, in Raynham, Mass., where she started working in 2000.

The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that Collins was fired in September for improperly accessing the e-mail of her supervisor and failing to attend psychological counseling the company gave her paid time off to attend.

The Journal reported that Brennan said those allegations were unfounded.

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