

## Bias Suit Depicts EMC as Frat House-esque

By Deborah Perelman  
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**Former EMC saleswomen claim they were denied equal pay, forced from accounts and made to visit strip clubs.**

Citing a macho, frat-boy atmosphere in the sales department, up to 500 former saleswomen at EMC are considering a class action sexual discrimination lawsuit against the storage giant, should a judge open an existing case on Sept. 17.

Alleging discrimination and harassment, two women filed a lawsuit against the Hopkinton, Mass. company in 2004. A judge for the U.S. District Court in Northern Illinois is set to hear arguments on Monday as to whether to allow other women who worked in sales at EMC from 2001 to 2004 to join the suit, the Wall Street Journal reported Sept. 12.

In the suit, the two former female employees described a hostile work environment at the company's sales office, in which they were systematically denied equal pay, forced to accompany men on company-paid strip club visits and had accounts taken away from them and given to men over the course of their 1999 to 2003 tenure. The women said they faced retaliation for complaining, all of which later drove them from the company.

Many of these allegations, including the strip club visits and shifting of accounts, were described in at least six other sexual discrimination lawsuits filed since 2003 by former EMC saleswomen, the Journal reports.

"One of the most telling facts about EMC's view of women is that it was not until 2001 that EMC issued a formal announcement that the company would no longer reimburse client entertainment expenses for strip clubs," reads the 2004 court filing.

EMC did not respond to a request for comment.

In a letter titled "The Truth About Working at EMC," chairman, president and CEO Joseph Tucci responded to the Journal article on the company's Web site, saying that former employees' complaints **"have no legal basis."**

"More importantly, they bear no resemblance to the work environment and broad opportunities that have long existed for EMC employees around the world. I was heartened to hear this morning from a number of our customers who wrote to say, 'This is not the EMC I have experienced,'" wrote Tucci.

The company is committed to maintaining a workplace free of harassment, the chairman continued, and cited the accomplishments of female EMC employees, including their sales earnings, the number of women at the vice president and senior vice president level, and the participation of women in the company's Women's Leadership Forum.

The suit claims that EMC's discrimination against women is evidenced by a lack of hiring and retention of female employees; only one of fourteen senior executives were female, and a maximum of six of 30 sales employees in the Chicago office were female in 2004.

The bias is called intentional, citing the consideration of sex, pregnancy, marital and parental status when making employee decisions including hiring, promoting, training and transferring accounts, as well as hiring, retaining and promoting men with known propensities to discriminate against women.

In at least one case where a lucrative account was assigned to a man, the reason given to the woman was that "he has a family to feed."