

CORPORATE DEMANDS OVERRIDE MORAL VIRTUES – SITES SUED FOR INSENSITIVE AD



The internet plays a huge role in our social lives – from finding long lost friends to remaining in touch with them. It was predictable that it would also attempt to run our love lives, through the umpteen dating sites that have mushroomed, over time. The intense competition amongst them to attract viewers, has led to them being a little callous and indifferent regarding the contents of their sites. This has resulted in two sites, PlentyofFish.Com, Vancouver and True.com, Dallas, having lawsuits slapped on them, by incensed parents of a deceased US Soldier, Lt. Peter Burks, who was killed in Iraq, four years ago. They allege that their son's photograph was used without their consent or knowledge. The parents are seeking compensatory and punitive damages. What really irked the parents was that their son's photograph was in uniform and the caption read, "Military Man Searching For Love." Recalling the tragic event, Alan Burke, Peter's father, said that his 26 year old son was killed in Baghdad, four years ago. The grief stricken family set up an "Unsung Hero's Fund" that, as a tribute to Peter, provided supplies to troops in war zones. The ad was brought to the family's notice, by a friend who recognized Peter's photo and clicked on it. "I felt horrified and disgusted. It upset me," said the distraught father. What was extremely unacceptable and objectionable, was the insinuation that he was trying to meet women online, as he was engaged at the time of his death. Plentyoffish media spokesperson Paul Bloudouff, admitted that since thousands of parties advertise on the company's site every month, it was impossible to authenticate and monitor the content or veracity of those ads. True.com president Ruben Buell said that he hasn't seen the lawsuit but "will be researching this diligently." He also sympathized with the Burkes' and said, "I certainly feel for his family". Both the sites showed some responsibility by taking swift action and withdrawing the offending advertisement. Alan Burke has said, that he would donate the money awarded in the suit to charities, and that the only purpose of his suit was to ensure that "the honour and legacy of Peter is protected. Human Value groups advocate that even though targeting interested web users is big business and it is a cut throat industry, but men and women engaged in advertising should have sensitive consciences, maintain high ethical standards and exhibit a strong sense of responsibility. There is no doubt that that the using the picture was insensitive and hurtful. That it was not consistent with America's core values. It added to the emotional suffering of friends and family, by bringing back horrible memories. It was disgraceful and disrespectful to a war hero. Stringent action against the guilty will send a strong signal that thoughtless and insensitive content would not be tolerated.

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