**Staff who are worried about bonuses should ‘leave Pity City,’ boss says**



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**New YorkCNN —**

One boss is learning the hard way how a pep talk can quickly go off the rails.

Andi Owen, CEO of office furniture company MillerKnoll, was asked in a recent video town hall about how workers should stay motivated if they don’t get a bonus. A clip of the video began circulating this week, sparking a backlash on social media.

Owen’s reply began with a calm encouragement to staff to “focus on the things you can control,” such as providing excellent customer service.

“Treat each other well. Be kind. Be respectful,” she said. “Lead by example.”

But her tone shifted rather suddenly. Owen went on to admonish her staff to “leave Pity City,” when it comes to fretting about bonuses.

“Don’t ask about ‘what are we going to do if we don’t get a bonus?’ Get the damn $26 million,” she said, apparently citing an internal metric. “Spend your time and your effort thinking about the $26 million we need and not thinking about what you’re going to do if we don’t get a bonus. All right? Can I get some commitment for that?”

She continued: “I had an old boss who said to me one time, ‘you can visit Pity City but you can’t live there.’ So people: Leave Pity City. Let’s get it done,” she said, before thanking attendees and telling them to “have a great day.”

The comments came at the end of a 75-minute meeting, and MillerKnoll said it was taken out of context.

“Andi fiercely believes in this team and all we can accomplish together, and will not be dissuaded by a 90-second clip taken out of context and posted on social media,” said Kris Marubio, a spokesperson for the company.

MillerKnoll has not yet decided bonus payouts for staff, including Owen, as its fiscal year ends in May.

In 2022, Owen took home nearly $5 million in compensation, which includes a $1.1 million salary plus various stock options and bonus pay, according to the company’s proxy filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The median employee income at MillerKnoll, the company behind sleek office furniture brands such as Herman Miller and Design Within Reach, was $44,810.

The past few years have been tough on businesses such as MillerKnoll’s that cater to office life. Although workers are coming back to the office more frequently, hybrid work has become the norm for many businesses in the United States, leaving offices roughly [half empty.](https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/10/business/commercial-real-estate-banks-offices/index.html)

MillerKnoll said last month that it expects lower sales in the current quarter, after reporting a drop in orders and margins in the first three months of the year.