

TRANSCRIPT - Dagbladet Sunday the 20th. of May 2007

Cover page:

Irene Furre argued with the bosses

-I got a rotten, dead animal in the mail

Page 4-5 spread headline:

Got a rotten, dead animal in the mail

Large picture:

Police filing: Irene Furre fears that someone she knows is behind the mafia threat from Germany. The police is investigating the case.

Small picture:

Threatening package: In this package from Germany, lies a rotten carcass the size of a cat.

Quotation:

"These are regular mafia methods."
-Irene Furre

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Article:

Full out war about cosmetics and money

When the police opened Irene Furre's (66) package from what she thinks is her former business partner in Germany, all they found was a rotten carcass. The police is investigating the case as a murder threat.

-That somebody should want me dead, feels totally unrealistic, says Irene Furre and nervously pushes the red glasses in place.

It's spring and the sun is shining in Oslo. The time is 17:52 in the afternoon, Monday the 16th of April.

Irene Furre is driving to the post office in Ulvøya. She has already gotten two reminders to fetch a package that arrived on the 23rd of March. Today is the last day before the package is returned.

A friend is with her in the car.

As the the man at the post office puts the package in front of her, she backs off. A sickening stench hits her. The package is sent from Düsseldorf in Germany and she sees the logo of the german-owned cosmetics company LR Health & Beauty Systems (LR, hereafter). A company Irene Furre has been a distributor for during the last 11 years, but the partnership has been broken due to a conflict about the new management style of the company.

Is the package connected to the conflict she has with the management of LR?

-Murder threat

Irene Furre does not dare to open the package, instead she takes it to the main police station in Oslo.

The police officer in charge carefully reaches into the box, and pulls out something big and black, looking like a cat. The animal has been dead for a long time. Only the long black and white tail reveal that this was once a living animal. The police officer looks gravely at Irene Furre and says:

-This is a death threat, and you have to take it seriously.

Furre can feel her stomach turn. Her friend takes up her mobile phone and calls Furre's son in Sweden. The kids are in kindergarten. The police asks them to make sure that they will not be picked up by strangers. Furre is told to install an alarm system and then programs the police officers mobile number on speed dial. She is scared.

In addition to criticizing the top management at LR directly, she is also writing about the conflict in detail on a web page (www.Stop-LR-Cheating.com). There she warns others against being involved with the direct sales company.

The police confirms that a package with a carcass about the size of a cat has been reported to them.

-The package had been at the post office so long, that it was impossible to identify the animal. At this point, all we know is that the package was sent from Düsseldorf. This is a difficult case for us to investigate, says Chief Inspector Willy Mydland.

-Makes 3 million (NOK)

Irene Furre has been involved in direct sales with cosmetics from the german company LR for more than 11 years. She has made good money, between 2.2 to 3.0 million kroner (NOK) annually. She has built a network of more than 30.000 distributors in most countries in Europe. Furre and the other distributors in the network makes a percentage commission on their turnover.

But when the company got new owners, the cooperation ended.

The founders of LR sold 75% of the company to the investment fund Apax Partners (www.apax.com).

They hired Nigel Mould to develop LR and increase the profit.

Troublemakers

Irene Furre has been an informal spokeswoman on behalf of several Norwegian and Swedish distributors in the LR-system. In an email to Nigel Mould she forwards harsh criticism of the company's new strategy and management. She writes that neither the Nordic Marketing Director, Johan Westerdahl, nor the manager of LR Norway, Nils Christian Lærdal, are doing an adequate job. She also writes that changes in the commission system and poor management of the Norwegian subsidiary has lead to demotivated distributors and lower turnover.

-It wasn't us

Lærdal confirms the company's conflict with Irene Furre.

-But to think that the disagreement have lead somebody within the company to send her a murder threat, is insane. LR does not profit from negative publicity, he points out.

He also confirms that the new owners tried out new strategies to increase sales.

-Some of it was good, while some could certainly have been better. The problem with Irene Furre's dissatisfaction, was that the criticism was not constructive. She made personal attacks, and had difficulties understanding that the final decision was made by the top management, not her, says Nils Christian Lærdal, former country manager, now chairman of the board of LR Norway.

Irene Furre has another explanation for why she was squeezed out of the company.

-What was once an entrepreneurial driven company, is today purely financially driven in order to sell the company at a higher price. That explains why LR/Apax does not accept criticism from its distributors. We are seen as troublemakers that ruins the chances of getting a higher price for the company when it is sold, says Irene Furre.

In July last year, former McKinsey consultant, Jens Abend, was hired as a sales director in Scandinavia to turn around the LR ship that was now on a wrong course.

Demands 12 millions

The new sales director was also informed about the disagreement with Irene Furre.

On December 23rd. 2006 in a conference room at Gardermoen Oslo Airport, Irene Furre, Jens Abend, Nils Christian Lærdal are sitting around the table. Jens Abend offers her two million kroner (NOK) to bury the hatchet. The agreement states that Irene Furre and LR cancels their contract and goes separate ways.

Irene Furre smiles. She is not selling the lucrative group of customers for two million (NOK). Within a second she is on her feet and walks towards the door. Abend says: "You have two days to think about it."

Irene didn't flinch and two days later here customer number was closed.

-I have start my own company and spent 11 years building a stable group of customers. In a few years I would have retired and was supposed to be able to lean back on a steady income stream. Now others will enjoy the fruits of my hard labour, she says in anguish.

Irene Furre has contacted a lawyer and informed LR that she contemplates a law suit against the company.

-My demand is 12 millions (NOK) in compensation. That is my loss from their contract breech, says Furre.

Now she fears that LR is behind the package from Germany. That somebody within the company is trying to silence her, and make her stop the possible lawsuit against the company.

Two days after Irene Furre got the package and filed a police report, Nigel Mould decided to step down as CEO for personal reasons. Early in may, the nordic marketing director, Johan Westerdahl, also left with immediate effect. According to LR's spokeswoman, Anke Potthoff, this has nothing to do with the package to Irene Furre.