

EBay, Former Execs To Pay \$55.7M Over Couple's Harassment

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-- A Massachusetts couple who were stalked and harassed by a group of [eBay](#) employees over their blog's coverage of the e-commerce giant reached a \$55.7 million settlement with the company and several former executives.

David and Ina Steiner, whose EcommerceBytes blog posts led to a bizarre retaliation campaign that included eBay employees sending the couple live insects and books on grieving, will receive \$48.7 million in compensation, their counsel at [Scalli Murphy Law PC](#) said in a statement late Monday.

The bulk of the funds, \$46 million, will come directly from eBay. Former CEO Devin Wenig will pay \$2 million, and two other executives, Wendy Jones and Steve Wymer, will contribute a total of \$550,000.

Another \$6 million from eBay will be donated to nonprofits, and Wenig will contribute \$1 million in Ina Steiner's name to a charity dedicated to shielding First Amendment rights, the

Steiners' lawyers said.

The case had previously been reported to the court as settled on the eve of what had been expected to be a six-week trial. However, in June, the Steiners asked that the case be reopened, telling the court the parties had been unable to reach terms and consummate a deal.

U.S. District Judge Patti Saris had set a new trial date for next January but also told the parties that she would not entertain further pre-trial motions.

In a filing Monday evening, the Steiners asked Judge Saris to dismiss the case.

The couple hired counsel while the harassment was still taking place but later contacted local police and the [FBI](#). Seven lower-level eBay employees pled guilty to various roles, and eBay entered a deferred prosecution agreement in which it paid \$3 million, agreed to three years of compliance monitoring and formally accepted responsibility for the conduct of its employees.

The executives have maintained that they played no role in the episode and were not charged.

"This case was always about more than obtaining financial

recovery. From the beginning, our clients wanted to uncover the truth, protect journalists and publishers, hold those responsible accountable, deter future corporate misconduct, and help ensure others would never have to endure what they experienced," their attorney, Christopher Murphy, said in the statement.

"Through years of discovery, motion practice and trial preparation, we were able to accomplish those objectives while securing meaningful compensation for two wonderful people," Murphy continued. "We believe this resolution sends a clear message that corporations and their executives cannot engage in this type of misconduct without facing significant consequences."

Wenig said in a statement he was not aware of the campaign but expressed regret over the episode.

"No one should ever have been subjected to what the Steiners endured in 2019, and I'm saddened by it, especially because it occurred during my time as CEO of eBay," Wenig said in the statement. "The harassment was deliberately done in secret and without my knowledge, as established by an independent law firm review, a federal probe, and the sworn testimony of the security employee convicted as the 'ringleader.' This behavior is antithetical to everything I stand for and believe in."

Wenig also said he has long supported the "protection of the press and the right to free speech," and said he is "pleased that a meaningful portion of my settlement will go directly to a non-profit committed to protecting freedom of the press."

"As we have long stated, what the Steiners were subjected to by former eBay employees in 2019 was wrong, reprehensible and should never have happened," eBay said in a statement released Tuesday. "We condemn, in the strongest terms possible, the employees who perpetrated and pled guilty to criminal charges for the misconduct against Ina and David Steiner. We also acknowledge the unprofessional tone in internal communications demonstrated, to different degrees and number, by Mr. Wenig, Mr. Wymer, and Ms. Jones. We continue to extend our deepest apologies to the Steiners."

The company said the settlement "is consistent with our commitment to fairly compensate the Steiners and fulfills our efforts to make things right."

"The 2019 conduct is not representative of eBay's culture or thousands of employees around the world today," the company said, detailing new leadership and strengthened policies, procedures, controls and training.

Counsel for Jones and Wymer did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Steiners and Steiner Associates LLC/eCommerceBytes are represented by Andrew G. Finkelstein, Brian D. Acard, Kenneth B. Fromson and Lawrence D. Lissauer of [Finkelstein & Partners LLP](#), Marc A. Diller of [Diller Law LLP](#), Christopher R. Murphy of Scalli & Murphy Law PC, Todd S. Garber and Erin Kelley of [Finkelstein Blankinship Frei](#)-Pearson & Garber LLP and Max Finkelstein of Jacoby & Meyers LLP.

EBay is represented by Jack W. Pirozzolo, Kathryn L. Alessi, Scott T. Nonaka, Daniel J. Feith and Emily A. Rose of [Sidley Austin LLP](#).

Wenig is represented by Martin G. Weinberg of [Martin G. Weinberg PC](#), Abbe David Lowell of [Lowell & Associates PLLC](#) and Kelly A. Librera of [Winston Taylor](#).

Wymer is represented by Caz Hashemi, Melissa Mills and Trevor Templeton of [Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC](#) and Lon F. Povich of [Anderson & Kreiger LLP](#).

Jones is represented by Andrew J. O'Connor, Casey Stewart, Christopher Durham, Sarah E. Walters and William L. Roberts of [Ropes & Gray LLP](#).

The case is Steiner et al. v. eBay Inc. et al., case number [1:21-cv-11181](#), in the [U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts](#).

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

Update: This story has been updated with comments from eBay.

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