

BURRITO BOSS, WORKER FIRED UP ON TWITTER

By Donna Goodison | Published: December 8, 2011

That Twitter sure can get you into a burrito-load of trouble. Just ask the Boloco employee who tweets as @allhailmaryjane... and her boss, Boloco CEO John Pepper. They both found out the hard way this week. @allhailmaryjane tweeted her disdain for her job at the Boston burrito chain Tuesday: "lol my job sucks too! I work at this place called @boloco on Newbury street."

"Sorry. Not anymore," a hot Pepper cracked, firing her by retweet.

But Pepper eventually cooled off and ate his words. He rescinded the Twitter termination and said he sent @allhailmaryjane a private email apology.

"She has not been fired," Pepper told the Herald. "She won't even be reprimanded for having something negative to say about Boloco."

Pepper explained, "When I was alerted to the tweet, I did a quick check on other tweets ... and found another couple about Boloco from a month ago. And what initially went through my mind was a lot harsher than, 'Sorry. Not anymore.' I'm human like anyone else."

Whether @allhailmaryjane ultimately stays with Boloco is up to her, according to Pepper. "I don't think I'd work at a job for very long that 'sucks,' but we'll try to help her find more things to enjoy," he said.

@allhailmaryjane could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Pepper is known for flying off the handle on Twitter. In April, he blasted city officials after inspectors threatened to shut down Boloco's Federal Street location because the company failed to get a permit to give away burritos at a mayoral event.

Social media can cause indigestion for employers and employees alike, said Mark Engel, a Boston employment law attorney. "You see athletes and all sorts of people getting themselves into trouble with it because you tend to shoot from the hip."

But Engel said Twitter firing likely is legal.

"I don't know that the means by which one communicates a termination is subject to the law," he said. "Assuming the communication doesn't run afoul of defamation, I don't see why you couldn't."

But it is "very foolish," said Boston labor law attorney Ellen Messing. "Most people get told privately just because it's a terrible management practice to fire people publicly. It's really distasteful to most people who believe that an employer shouldn't be publicly humiliating people who work for them, even if they have done something that deserves discipline."

— dgoodison@bostonherald.com

Copyright (c) 2011 Boston Herald