

“Wayfair would seemingly want to kill me”: Stage 4 cancer patient laid off

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5 February 2024

Are you a tech worker facing layoffs? Contact us here or by filling out the form below and tell us how you've been impacted by the recent layoffs. Comments will be published anonymously.

Late last month, a Canadian tech worker was told her job at Wayfair was terminated despite suffering from late stage breast cancer. Andrena M. was one of over 1,650 employees laid off in January at Wayfair, an online e-commerce technology platform, in the third mass layoffs at the company since 2022.

“On January 19, 2024, at about 7:00 am,” Andrena wrote in a viral LinkedIn post, “while getting ready to head to my chemotherapy treatment I received a message from a friend, ‘were you impacted by the Wayfair terminations.’ I was shocked by this question and quickly responded ‘can I be terminated while I am on disability?’

“To my shock and horror I was in fact terminated,” she learned in an email.

The layoffs at Wayfair and other companies have reached a 10-month high as US employers cut 82,307 jobs in January, according to a report by Challenger. Layoffs have begun to hit workers in every industry, including technology, automotive, UPS, food production, retail, journalism and the financial sector.

Prior to the Christmas holiday, Wayfair CEO Niraj Shah, who has an estimated net worth of \$1.6 billion, berated rank-and-file employees in a condescending email. “Working long hours, being responsive, blending work and life, is not anything to shy away from,” Shah wrote. “There is not a lot of history of laziness being rewarded with success. Hard work is an essential ingredient in any recipe for success. I embrace this, and the most successful people I know do as well.”

Andrena spoke out against Shah’s inhumane email: “I’ll admit I, and possibly every other Wayfair employee had started questioning the integrity of Wayfair’s leadership after seeing Niraj’s email to staff in the news where he gaslighted staff, essentially suggesting that ambitious people must work long hours and find ways to blend work and life, that to do anything but was lazy. I wondered what kind of human being would think this, let alone publish it.”

To make matters worse, Andrena said of her layoff, “I was not sent the actual termination letter until several hours after that initial email, which was really an invitation to a meeting for staff who had been impacted. To say this raised my anxiety would be an understatement. I kid you not my blood pressure which is always normal, despite stage 4, was the highest I can recall and my resting

heart rate the highest on record.

“When the termination letter finally came later that afternoon, it did not address my unique circumstances, which meant I had to arrange a meeting with HR for the following week. I had to suffer through the weekend. And if that wasn’t bad enough, I would later come to find that my situation was not even contemplated. HR did not have the answer to my most pressing concern — what would happen to my disability?”

“I won’t stop fighting. My life matters.”

“Imagine that,” Andrena wrote on the termination while battling metastatic cancer. “I was simply a number on a balance sheet. The small matter of my stage 4 diagnosis and me fighting for my life did not matter. That I did not choose this and I am a human being did not matter. That my health insurance is most critical at this time did not matter. That I am unemployable did not matter... In the end, we are all disposable assets to our jobs, numbers on a balance sheet.”

Summing up the terrible experience, Andrena shared a picture of herself in her current condition. “I have shared my picture so you can see me unfiltered—a woman with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer fighting for her life—no eyelashes, no eyebrows, no hair, burnt skin, swollen from steroids. A real human person, not a role to be filled.”

“And as much as Wayfair would seemingly want to kill me please know that I won’t stop fighting. My life matters... Please share my story to raise awareness.”

Andrena’s story has received a widespread outpouring of support, both on LinkedIn and on her GoFundMe page. Many workers expressed their outrage for this cruel and heartless decision, questioning its legality.

One of the commenters said, “So sorry to hear Andrena. That’s heartless of them. You have my support and I will most definitely stop buying from Wayfair and any other company that treats its employees with such disdain.”

“There are very few companies and people in positions of leadership that have a heart for people,” another wrote.

In a subsequent post, Andrena noted, “I moved to Seattle for treatment on December 9, 2023. I am working with Dr. Ben Chue

from Lifespring Cancer Treatment Center. The decision to leave my family and move here was not an easy one. However, I was not doing well on the standard of care offered in Canada and my oncologist was not very positive or open (to say the least). Unfortunately a number of metastases progressed so I do not have the benefit of time to play games.

“As a 45 year old mother of two I refuse to give up. I want to see my children in their adult lives, meet and love grandchildren.

“Dr. Chue’s protocol (which he graciously shared with my Canadian oncologist) has a number of stage 4 patients who are living and thriving as much as 20 years, cancer free. I’ve met a few thrivers myself and look forward to being one of them. As I do not have US health insurance I pay out of pocket for treatment. I secured a loan for treatment and family/ friends have been helping me with living costs. My plan was to offset costs by traveling back and forth to Canada for scans, naturopathic support, medication, dental etc. I actually have dental surgery (which I must do before beginning a treatment for my bones) planned for March which I’ll no longer be able to do.

“My plan to offset treatment costs has now been thwarted by the loss of insurance. I will continue to get scans in Canada as the government covers those costs. It’s a common misconception that all health is free in Canada. This is simply not so — medication, dental, vision, naturopathy etc are not covered.”

Jobs bloodbath in tech, logistics and auto

The mass layoffs in every sector are part of the ruling class policy to wage a war on the working class as a whole and to accelerate unemployment. The jobs bloodbath began in the technology sector in 2022-2023 and is now expanding throughout the economy in multiple industries. UPS is the most recent to slash jobs with over 12,000 jobs announced to be cut this year.

The tech sector has seen some of the largest wave of continuous layoffs. On Monday, Snap, the parent company of social media platform Snapchat, announced it was cutting 10 percent of its global workforce, around 500 people. This follows a 20 percent reduction in Snap’s staff in 2022.

As reported just over a month ago, the last quarter of 2023 saw a massive uptick in layoffs in the tech industry; the most infamous being Spotify, which announced the letting go of 17 percent of its workforce, citing “the challenges ahead.” Thousands of tech workers were left without any prospects in the weeks or months leading to the holidays, intensifying an already dire situation for many as more and more tech workers entered a job market which was already stretched thin due to repeated rounds of layoffs throughout 2022 and 2023.

Those holiday layoffs generated a significant amount of reaction on social media, with a lot of tech and non-tech workers alike taking to platforms such as LinkedIn to express their disgust with the “profits over human lives” approach which tech companies have embraced.

It is becoming increasingly evident that this trend is not only

continuing, but also escalating. The online tech-sector employment tracker, Layoffs.fyi, reported 24,584 layoffs in January from 93 companies.

In addition to Wayfair, a number of other cuts were announced at SAP, Microsoft and Ebay, reporting 8,000, 1,900 and 1,000 layoffs, respectively. Microsoft had already proceeded with a round of layoffs at the end of 2023, in particular amongst its Nokia and LinkedIn branches, two companies acquired by the corporation several years ago. This time, the layoffs are affecting their gaming division, with workers from Activision, Blizzard and Xbox finding themselves without a job as the new year begins.

More broadly, layoffs continue to affect other areas of the working class, in particular the auto industry, with multiple layoffs announced by Stellantis, Ford and GM, in the aftermath of the phony “stand up” strike plotted by the UAW in collaboration with the Biden administration. In a shameless publicity stunt, the UAW leadership, including members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), announced their full support for Biden’s re-election campaign.

This new round of layoffs comes in the wake of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where the central topic of discussion was the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on the working class. As reported in a recent article, the use of AI and automation could lead to a reduction in employment of 5 percent this year alone, with long term effects for roughly 300 million workers in major economies. This technological shift could eventually affect roughly two thirds of all jobs to some degree or another.

Instead of using AI and other new technology to improve workers lives, these massive investments by the ruling class have as their sole objective the pursuit of ever-increasing profits at the expense of the working class. The ruling class aims to accelerate its attacks on broad layers of the population and the working class as it carries out a war on two fronts, both with its support for the genocide in Gaza and the expanding wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and in its attacks on the living standards of workers at home.

The capitalist system has nothing to offer for broad layers of the population except the existential threats of world war, fascism, genocide and a class war on the working class, which is provoking mass opposition globally with protests and strike waves.

Tech workers must take up the fight for socialism to oppose the dead end offered by capitalism. Only by turning to the working class and helping to build a mass international movement for social equality through the formation of rank-and-file workplace committees, can workers across multiple industries effectively fight against the jobs bloodbath and the brutality of the capitalist system.



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