

IMPERFECT PICTURES

a Role-Playing Exercise for Integrating Women into Nontraditional Jobs

The Background

An apprentice electrician, Ohma Wattage, has started to feel uncomfortable working around some of the male carpenters on her jobsite. They make constant remarks referring to her personal life, make sexual jokes loudly and purposefully in front of her and have hung a calendar of scantily clad women, posing suggestively with tools, on the door to their shanty. She has to pass this on the way to the bin where her pipe is stored. She is required to work closely with the carpenter crew, even though they work for a different company, coordinating their work. The pressure is on to finish up, since the floor is overdue for completion.

When Ohma asked the carpenters to remove the calendar, they became angry and since then have been hampering her work and schedule in indirect ways; not finishing framing in an area that she is scheduled to put pipe in, changing the work schedule at the last minute, or insisting they need to work where she is working and moving her out of the way. Because they are being so uncooperative, she can't get her work done. It has caused her a great deal of stress. Her foreman, Archie Conduit is angry with her for not being finished on that floor and missing three days of work when she stayed home with the stomach flu. He has implied that if she can't keep up, he'll have to lay her off. When she tried to explain her problem with the carpenters, describing their attitude and the incident with the calendar, he insists that she should just learn to "go along to get along" and to "stop making a mountain out of a mole hill".

Ohma mentions the problem to her union steward on the jobsite and calls the coordinator of the apprenticeship training program. Although he says he will try to find her another job, he isn't pleased that she has complained. Ohma also calls the Tradeswomen's Support Center, where she discusses the problem with Jenda Justus, the counselor who suggests that she, the coordinator, steward and Ohma meet to discuss the problem and propose solutions. Jenda also calls the site superintendent to report the problem.

Meanwhile at the weekly jobsite coordination meeting of the subcontractors and the general contractor, the site superintendent, Huntley LeSavage, raises his concern that work on the floor where Ohma and the carpenters are working is not yet finished. He also says he had a phone call from the women's group suggesting there might be a problem with sexual harassment and wants to know what is going on. Archie Conduit, the electrical foreman, says that he's going to bring a more experienced male apprentice to work next week and everything should be okay then. Joey Studd, says his men just want to be able to work like they used to and that what they put in their gangboxes is their business. Huntley suggests the two foreman and himself sit down with the General contractor's Equal Employment Opportunity manager to figure out what to do.

YOUR MISSION:

1. Divide into the two groups as indicated in the narrative. In each group discuss each person's point of view on what happened and what can be done to resolve it. Decide whether there is a violation of the law, who is being harmed and who is responsible. Develop a proposal and strategy for meeting together with the other group. Identify immediate solutions and a longer term strategy to address what happened.
2. You will have ten minutes to discuss this in the small group.
3. You will then have fifteen minutes with both groups together to identify two immediate steps and one or two long term policy changes that can be implemented. Identify who will take what action. Use Worksite 2000 as necessary.

RULES OF THE GAME:

1. Sustain your role at all times during the game itself, from the moment you introduce yourself until the conclusion of the problem solving -session.
2. Work to gain the agenda of your character, even though it may not reflect your own perspective or values
3. Do not fabricate activities, pasts, or agreements about other characters which do not happen in the confines of the game ... (conversations, prior agreements, etc..) unless they are written into your role.
4. No financial bribes can be used in the game.

CHARACTERS:

Electrician-Ohma Wattage is a divorced mother of three boys. Ohma's wages are her only income and she's just moved to her own place. This is the sixth company she's worked for she is just finishing the third year of her apprenticeship. She has been with this company only a few short months but has a good record with them. Although this job pays a lot better than her former job as a secretary she doesn't know how much longer she can put up with the attitudes of the guys on the job. She is worried that she is getting the reputation of being a whiner, but she is certain she needs to stand up for herself to get good training and fair treatment.

Apprentice Coordinator-Bob Barker, from the old school, came in on reform slate. He talks tough, acts gruff, but truly cares about the well-being of all the apprentices he's responsible for. He has difficulty placing women, doesn't want to try to find another contraction for Ohma since this company has a lot of work and she has been placed too many times already. Planning for his retirement in the next few years, Barker doesn't want any controversy. He is really baffled that so many women who get in drop out of the program and remains angry with the tradeswomen's group because their lawsuit several years ago cost the union a lot of money in lawyer's fees.

Electrical Union Steward: Hi Voltage, is thinking about running for union president. He wants to

make sure all the members like him.

Trades Women Advocate-Jenda Justus is a former pipefitter. She has worked as advocate for six years. Known for being aggressive and tenacious. Her own past experience with sexual harassment makes her strongly empathetic. She's tired of how slow attitudes change. She strongly believes in training, for women, male workers and supervisors as the way to ease women's acceptance into the trades. But she also has pushed lawsuits when necessary.

Electrical Foreman-Archie Conduit has 20 years in the trades, 15 years as a foreman. He doesn't think women can do the work, that men need these jobs, and that women in the trades are ruining the industry. He is the sole support of his family while his wife stays home. He runs a tight ship and doesn't like controversy. He doesn't like anyone who goes over his head and especially doesn't like "complainers". He invites the rest of his crew for beers most nights but has never invited Ohma. He has more important things to worry about than "girlie pictures" on the jobsite.

General Contractor Superintendent-Huntley LeSavage is under a lot of pressure to bring this public job in under budget. There have been a lot of slow downs and safety citations. He's a strong advocate for safety training and emphasizes safety at all weekly meetings and requires the subcontractors on his sites to train their crews regularly, going beyond the federal regulations because he thinks it makes good business sense. He's known as fair and smart. He also knows that part of his job is to mediate between work crews and to meet other federal guidelines.

Carpenter Foreman-Joey Studd is a married father of two daughters. His wife works as an accountant, and has told her husband of how hard it was when she became the first woman partner. This is his first assignment as a foreman on a job. He is unaware of his workers' behavior until the coordination meeting.

GC EEO Manager-James Monitor, used to work for the government in their affirmative action office but wanted a higher salary. He knows that the company will be reviewed by the government at the end of the year, but that they have plenty of private work for the future.

Observers

Pay attention to the actions and behavior of each character, remind people to stay in character, note what worked, where there were obstacles and other observations on this problem and the process to resolve it.



This product was funded by a grant awarded under the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative as implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration. The information contained in this product was created by a grantee organization and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. All references to non-governmental companies or organizations, their services, products, or resources are offered for informational purposes and should not be construed as an endorsement by the Department of Labor. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it and is intended for individual organizational, non-commercial use only.

www.CHICAGOWOMENINTRADES.org