

Conducive environment essential for anti-harassment @ workplace

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Not a case study.

This real life example is a situation in my career, some years back, when I joined as an HR segment Head in a leading MNC.

During orientation session, I was specifically on-boarded that the working hours of the organization is flexible and also there is no restriction for movement of employees. The only condition is that – every employee should perform duty for 8 hours where the system automatically computes the hours performed per day (or Productive billable hours).

I came from a different industry, where I (and my team) had to be strictly in the workplace / office premises, perform duty and available to the Management, any time. I have the habit of coming early to the office, much before the regular office opening hours, just to meet and greet every one during morning.

Every day I could see employees (men and women) just like that move away from their seats, go out of the office and comeback after 10 or 15 minutes. For me the atmosphere in the new company is quite fascinating, as even my reportees follow similar work style of other team members.

I was little curious and asked men, who goes out frequently for break. They told me that they had gone for a “smoke break”. Even few non-smokers who accompanied, said that they just gave “company” to them.

In my previous organization this type of breaks are usually not allowed and men will go for a smoke only during Lunch breaks.

Then I was curious to ask women... but little reserved, knowing the provisions of PoSH Act, wants to restrict the same question with the women members in my team (thinking that I can atleast make an apology within my team, if something goes wrong). I was absolutely flabbergasted (got a right situation to use this word in a sentence) to get the same answer from them too – “went for smoke break”. Even before I could ask them, (do you smoke), they replied, “Why we should not smoke?”

Seeing that I am very upset with the reply, one of my team (women) member later told me that, they just go out, for a chat, but never smoke. They wanted to use the time to relieve their work pressure (added to the domestic pressure they always have) and get recharged. She told me when Men can always take a “smoke break” (whether they smoke or not) which is “Justified in every Organization”, why can’t they use the same phrase and avail the break. Finally, I felt justified.

I told myself that henceforth I shall not ask anyone, about breaks, even in the companies I propose to join later (and never done, after).

Women @ work are to be treated equally like men in a workplace (specifically, Professionals as Professionals), which are rarely visible.

No women like the following environment in any organization:

1. No woman as a group or as an individual shall be nicknamed and identified.
2. Tagging of women is hated @workplace (even if tagging is “lady Superstar”). Forms of tagging / nick naming, like
 - a. Someone’s (who is working in the same organization) wife / sister / daughter / relative
 - b. Superiors calling their secretaries, reporting female employees as “Honey”, “Sweetie”, “Sweet Heart”, “Darling” – during conversation or in the emails or in the social chats
3. The expression Gender-neutral, is also having equal number of women employees in an organization/department, which happens only in garment industries. In other industries, it is not.
4. Behavior of men @ meetings/ team reviews/discussions – (a) being loud with more noise, showing their authority and (b) in many such occasions (mostly)... prompt a question/query only to male team members first (as if only men are knowledgeable and skilled enough to take the questions)
5. Designate stereotype administrative works to women team members, when there is Event/Happening, at the office. Women are considered less capable of conducting anything when compared to men

Such attitudes of few men are stepping stones of “unethical workplace”, which needs to be identified and eliminated by the Management.

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