

## Make it Work Q & A

Coach Vera Held's verdict on difficult situations at work.

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**Q: I work in women's retail; our clothing ranges in size from petite through to plus. Yesterday, a customer asked if I was pregnant. I said, "No, I have a medical condition." She responded, "Well, then you're fat." She said this in front of my staff and other customers. I said nothing. Rude customers are common, did I handle the situation properly?**

**A:** I'm sorry this happened to you, and I commend you for seeing the situation exactly for what it is —her issue. By not taking her intrusive, inappropriate question and response, personally, you left yourself free of upset to do your job. Some plus size customers could well have been privy to the dialogue and found it disconcerting. Atmosphere is critical to repeat business, so continue to focus on exemplary customer care and creating a positive, helpful and friendly store environment. And never let a put-down artist get you down.

**Q: I sit on a volunteer board. In year one, due to the board president, the workflow doubled. He was insulting, combative and each of his comments demanded a complicated defensive response, denial or debunking. There were 2,200 e-mails my first year because of this president whom we did succeed in ousting. In year two, I'm down to one daily e-mail and 15 hours of work a month.**

**A:** When volunteer boards go off the rails, they are brutal. The dictator personality that you describe requires skill and acumen to deal with. Bravo to you for uniting the team to take action and have the culprit ousted. It sounds like things are now going well from time, energy and emotional standpoints. Volunteer commitments require careful research. The more information you have in advance, the more informed your decision-making and planning can be. This research will also allow you to better balance your work/life priorities and commitments. I commend you for generously volunteering, leading the charge and solving a major headache.

**Q: For 15 years, I've provided a vital hairdressing service at a seniors' facility. The organization has decided to outsource hairdressing, and as there is nowhere for me to transfer to, I will receive a package and leave. I'm 48 and I've been in the same vocation since I was 16. I don't wish to return to school. What should I do?**

**A:** A good question to ask yourself is, "Do I enjoy working with seniors?" If the answer is "Yes," then you can look to continuing as a hairdresser at another senior's residence. You might also like to consider working with seniors as a caretaker, recreationist or activity co-ordinator. Some of these positions may require certification. A good career coach will be able to help you. This is a time of reflection and transition: look to your head, heart and gut. There you will find all the answers as to what is "right" for you.

Vera Held ([www.veraheld.com](http://www.veraheld.com)) is a coach, facilitator, speaker, writer, PR consultant and the author of business best-seller *How Not to Take it Personally*. Send your tough workplace questions to Vera at vera@veraheld.com.