

## Make it Work Q & A

# Put a stop to sex talk

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

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**Q: Two of my colleagues are seeing one another. "Jean" talks non-stop about their sex life. Actually, she's worse than any of the guys at our car dealership. And her work's gone downhill, too. What should I do?**

**A:** Cut her off immediately the next time she starts talking about her sex life. Tell her you are not interested and that her personal intimate life is none of your business. Her focus needs to be her work. By giving her an audience, you are compounding the problem. So your job is to not listen, to not be complicit. Change the topic to work, create physical space, make a phone call, respond to a pressing work matter, discuss a future meeting or training initiative. By doing so, you will be helping her to not just keep her job but to save what's left of her reputation. And if you really care about her, suggest she see her doctor. There may be more going on here beyond poor judgement, lack of discretion and the need to keep up with the boys in a male-dominated work environment.

**Q: When my long-term consulting project ended, I offered to take "Shelley," my full-time replacement, out to lunch. My goal was to help; I had been told that she had received no training and was floundering. She appeared grateful for the invite. But one of the v-ps cancelled the lunch by e-mail citing "busyness." Yet I saw Shelley leave the office solo at lunchtime.**

**A:** This vp's behaviour was counter-productive. Your goodwill lunch gesture was properly received by Shelley and no doubt you could have shared much to help her. There is nothing more disconcerting than starting a new job and having no one to ask the multitude of questions that need to get asked. It takes time just to locate files — no wonder she is floundering. Your long-standing relationship with the organization prevails. At the first opportunity share your concerns with another v-p you can trust, so that you can nurture Shelley as needed in her new role.

**Q: "Wendy," one of our team captains, got her title by getting her buddies to vote for her. She was also involved in tallying the votes and I'm told was responsible for cutting off voting early. She's not interested in benefitting our team or our volunteer organization.**

**A:** Wendy appears to be a cheat and power monger who is looking to further her status. You will need to work around her. Consider a leadership role on the team or supporting a teammate you think would be a great leader. This will help to counteract Wendy's negative influence. Stay focused on the goals of the volunteer organization; your decisions and behaviours need to be a consistent reflection of those goals.

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