

# 1

## Half a Pie, or None?



### CASE OVERVIEW

This case involves potential sexual discrimination in the form of sexual stereotyping of work. Important issues about organizational culture and individual career development apply to the situations in the case. Students must evaluate a corporate structure and culture from the viewpoint of a female job applicant, first, and then from the viewpoints of both this woman as an employee and one of her supervisors. Three “decision points” occur in the case, and students are asked to respond at each of these points.

#### ❖ BODY OF CASE

“Are you prepared to accept our offer of the position of project manager, Ms. Andersen?” asked Mr. Green, president of Computing Central.

Ms. Andersen recalled her hours considering this reduced offer, which she had suspected would be forthcoming, in contrast to the position for which she had actively applied. To accept “half a pie” or not

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posed the first of many dilemmas she would face regarding Computer Central and the next stage of her career.

### **Background**

Kirsten Andersen was by this time a highly qualified senior management consultant and business developer. She had extensive training and experience in market and business development. Holding a B.A. in economics and international marketing, M.A. degrees in international communication and international law and organization, and a finance certificate from the Wharton School of Business, she had also completed all the course work for a doctorate in political sociology.

In the previous 5 years Ms. Andersen built a successful consulting firm that helped develop research, design, and implementation of foreign market entry strategies, and integration of technical systems for 15 Fortune 200 companies. In the previous year Ms. Andersen had sold her firm for more than 2 million dollars and pondered her next career move. Her goals were to acquire more technical consulting and business development experience abroad and to work within a major corporate structure to enhance her marketability for senior executive positions. She also wanted an opportunity to aggressively pursue the high earnings she had attained in her own firm.

### **The “Half a Pie” Offer**

Early in her job search a colleague provided entry to Computer Central, a European firm developing new technical enterprises in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe that was part of the worldwide umbrella corporation Techniques Advantage. Computer Central retained its most qualified personnel in the position of evaluator, who assess new projects and present recommendations to clients about technical strategy. The position also carried with it substantial sales and bonus income potential. Attaining an evaluator’s slot, then, would have met all Ms. Andersen’s career objectives at the time of the interview.

Ms. Andersen was interviewed for the evaluator’s position at Computer Central a few months later. She met with Mr. Jones, vice president of Computer Central, as well as with Mr. Green, the firm’s president. She was also interviewed by CEO Charles, worldwide head of Techniques Advantage. Each of these individuals told her in interviews that she was well qualified to be an evaluator; Mr. Green, in particular, told her that “You will be an asset to our evaluators team.”

Mr. Green also told Ms. Andersen that Mr. Jones said, "She definitely is an evaluator."

Later that month Mr. Green submitted Ms. Andersen's name for final approval for appointment as an evaluator. Shortly thereafter, however, he reported to Ms. Andersen that CEO Charles of Techniques Advantage stated she could not be hired as an evaluator because "No woman will be on my evaluators team." Mr. Charles had privately elaborated his opinion that the energy, drive, and commitment required of evaluators was beyond what most women could offer a firm.

Mr. Green then attempted to persuade Ms. Andersen to come to work for Computer Central under a different job title. He assured her informally that she would be given evaluator duties and eventually converted to the proper job title once she was working on projects in Europe. As an incentive, Mr. Green agreed to pay a base salary commensurate with that of beginning evaluators and to provide her with per diem payment at the evaluator rather than the standard operations rate. (But Ms. Andersen would initially have no sales and few bonus income possibilities.) Mr. Green fully intended to help Ms. Andersen move into an evaluator's position at the earliest moment acceptable to the corporation and was confident that this would occur. (See Student Response section for "Decision Point #1," alternatives for Ms. Andersen and Mr. Green.)

### **"Half a Pie" Remains Half**

With these conditions, and assuming that she would be assigned evaluation duties as well as quickly converted to evaluator status, Ms. Andersen accepted Computer Central's offer and was hired as a project manager.

With her extensive technical background, Ms. Andersen was soon in great demand for work on the evaluators teams, under the supervision of various senior evaluators. From February through December of her first year with the company, she worked on projects in Europe. Although she worked on evaluation teams, she was nonetheless designated as a project manager. She was not allowed to make presentations of the technical findings to clients; instead, she was required to write scripts of the senior evaluators' presentations, even in cases for which they lacked the technical expertise to present or explain the information fully. Lacking the official title of evaluator, Ms. Andersen was also not given a team to oversee.

At the end of the year, Ms. Andersen spoke with the head of the European evaluation team, asking for the chance to move into an

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evaluator's slot. This individual told her that she had to "carry the bags" in order to "earn her wings"—something she felt she had been doing the previous 6 months, and which, to her knowledge, other (male) evaluators had not been required to do. The head of the European team also proposed that she work on an evaluation for a major client who had wanted a technical, rather than a productivity, evaluation, and told her that "This is your shot." At about this time, Ms. Andersen learned from two other female project managers that they, also, had been hired with expectations of moving into evaluator positions.

Ms. Andersen gladly accepted her newest assignment. She soon discovered, however, that a senior and a junior evaluator, neither of whom had any particular technical background, were also assigned to this new technical evaluation. Kirsten worked hard on the project and developed the presentation of the technical aspects the client had requested. She was then excluded from the final two meetings with the client, when the sale was to have taken place. The sale was not made, and Ms. Andersen later was told that she had "blown her chance" to become an evaluator. She reported these developments informally to Mr. Green, who had initially hired her; he continued to believe that an evaluator's position was "just around the corner" for Ms. Andersen. (See Student Response section for "Decision Point #2," alternatives for Ms. Andersen and Mr. Green.)

### **Pie in the Face**

Late in her second year of employment, Computer Central merged with another subsidiary of Techniques Advantage, as part of a general reorganization. At this time, the head of the new European Evaluation unit asked for a list of 10 employees to be converted to evaluators, since technical knowledge was needed for the expanded evaluation team. Because Ms. Andersen was the only employee already working (in other than an evaluator's position) on evaluation teams in Europe, it was widely assumed that she would be selected as one of the 10 new evaluators. Instead, the executive selected 10 men and immediately promoted them to evaluator positions. Of the 2 European selectees, 1 was a programmer and the other a project manager in operations who had repeatedly stated that he had no interest in the high-stress position of evaluator.

Shortly thereafter, Ms. Andersen, at her own request, met with the president of the newly merged firm. She informed him that she had been hired to perform an evaluator's duties and wanted to be

appointed to that position. The president acknowledged that there was a “different culture” within Techniques Advantage that needed to be changed and that “he needed strong people like her to help him.” He proposed that Ms. Andersen complete an operations installment in the short run and promised that he would confirm with the head of European Evaluation that she would then join the evaluation team as an evaluator. The president informed her later that day that the evaluation team head had said he would be “delighted to have her on his evaluation team, after a little more experience.”

Once again, Ms. Andersen agreed. As part of the new arrangement, she was asked to substitute a 3-week home leave rotation for the standard 6-week rotation. To accommodate the company, she agreed to the suggested reduction in home rotation as well.

Ms. Andersen worked effectively on the operations project; in fact, her work set the standard for the other employees with regard to the presentation of analytical material, as well as for structural reorganization and staffing recommendations.

Soon after joining the project, however, she began receiving a series of inaccurate, unusual, and unwarranted memos from Mr. Lawton, head of operations. These memos dealt with minor matters related to her work schedule, such as being an hour late for arrival, even though she and her coworkers did not punch time clocks and routinely worked nights and weekends. In particular, Mr. Lawton criticized her use of her home-leave rotation, even though the 3-week rather than 6-week cycle was undertaken at the request of the company.

Ms. Andersen was sufficiently disturbed by these actions that early in her third year she wrote to Mr. Green and subsequently met with him to discuss her concerns and what action she should pursue next. She was particularly upset about the loss of opportunity and earnings due to being passed over for the evaluators openings and about the recent unwarranted memos. Clearly, some additional action on her part was warranted, but she was uncertain about what course to pursue next. (See Student Response section for “Decision Point #3,” alternatives for Ms. Andersen and Mr. Green.)

#### ❖ RELATED READINGS

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## ❖ STUDENT RESPONSE

**Decision Point #1: The Job Offer**

1. Assume the role of Mr. Green, who has been told that “women don’t throw themselves into their work enough” to be evaluators. Why doesn’t Mr. Green confront his superior, CEO Charles, with the issue of sexual stereotyping of the evaluator’s position? If you chose to confront the issue at this point, how might you do so?

2. Assume the role of the job applicant, Ms. Andersen. Should Ms. Andersen accept this lower-level position, even though executives

of Computer Central seem to agree she is qualified for the evaluator's job for which she has applied? What advantages would you consider at this point?

### **Decision Point #2: Initial Experience in the Firm**

1. Assume the role of Ms. Andersen. After encountering sexual stereotypes in the type of work and presentations you are allowed to engage in, and in the light of similar treatment of several other women, what major action alternatives can you identify? Which of these do you prefer, and why?

2. Assume the role of Mr. Green. Ms. Andersen has spoken to you about her frustrations with sexual stereotyping in her assignments and about similar experiences of several other women. How might you affect the climate of the organization on these matters? Describe some specific alternatives you would consider.

### **Decision Point #3: After Evaluators' Positions Are Awarded to Men**

1. Assume the role of Ms. Andersen. Should you continue your responsibilities, hoping for an evaluator's position later, resign, pursue legal action, or some combination of these options? Justify the action you recommend, using information from the case.

2. What evidence of sex discrimination is there in this case? (Consult the Appendix for the case.)

3. Assume the role of Mr. Green. Identify your alternatives, should Ms. Andersen pursue legal remedies. Which of these do you prefer, and why?

**APPENDIX: TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964**

The following sections are taken directly from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352) as it appears in volume 42 of the United States Code, beginning at section 2000e. Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

Under this law, companies employing fifteen or more people are prevented from discriminating in the areas of

- Hiring and firing
- Compensation and promotion
- Transfer or layoff
- Job advertisement and recruitment
- Testing
- Training and apprenticeship programs
- Use of company facilities
- Fringe benefits, retirement plans, and disability leave

The Civil Rights Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-166) amends several sections of Title VII related to the proving of the “disparate impact” of employer’s actions on different groups of employees, and the awarding of damages in such cases. The Equal Pay Act is another amendment to Title VII; it requires that an employer pay all employees equally for equal work, regardless of gender. The law covers situations where men and women perform jobs that require equal skill, effort, and responsibility. The exception to this law is a pay system that is based on a factor other than gender, such as seniority, or the quantity or quality of items produced or processed.

An employer is expected to post notices describing the federal laws prohibiting job discrimination based on race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, and disability and describing the provisions of the Equal Pay Act. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was created in the 1964 Civil Rights Act to investigate and, if necessary, prosecute in court violations of the employment provisions of the law. The EEOC publishes clear guidelines on how to file complaints of employment discrimination.

**Unlawful Employment Practices  
(Title VII, 1964 Civil Rights Act)**

SEC. 2000e-2. (Section 703)

(a) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer—

1. to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to



his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or

2. to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

(b) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employment agency to fail or refuse to refer for employment, or otherwise to discriminate against, any individual because of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or to classify or refer for employment any individual on the basis of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

(c) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for any employer, labor organization, or joint labor-management committee controlling apprenticeship or other training or retraining, including on-the-job training programs, to discriminate against any individual because of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in admission to, or employment in, any program established to provide apprenticeship or other training.

