

# Social Issues in Management and Business Ethics: Exercises and Activities

Exercise/Activity Title:

## **Sexual Harassment Scenarios**

Exercise/Activity Explanation (150 words or less):

Four short sexual harassment scenarios involving a male boss and female administrative assistant are presented for analysis. The scenarios evolve from flattering comments about appearances, going out for drinks after work, affectionate touching, and sharing unsolicited junk email about improving sexual performance. Students assess whether the scenario create a "hostile environment" at work, and discuss differences in opinions.

Assignment is on the following page.

Optional – Contact Information:

If interested in additional information, please contact Professor Denis Collins, School of Business, Edgewood College, Madison, WI; [dcollins@edgewood.edu](mailto:dcollins@edgewood.edu)

## Sexual Harassment Scenarios

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The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission differentiates between two types of sexual harassment – quid pro quo and hostile environment.

- Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when conditions of employment or employment decisions are dependent on: (1) unwelcome sexual advances, (2) requests for sexual favors, or (3) other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- A “hostile environment” occurs when any of these three conditions interferes with an individual’s work performance.

**Activity:** Have students discuss the following: Do the four scenarios in the “Sexual Harassment” exercise constitute sexual harassment? Does each scenario create a “hostile environment” at work? Why?

- Reach each scenario and take a tally for each one – Yes or No
- Go back, reread Scenario One
- Form small groups around common agreement
- Facilitate small group discussion between the two perspectives
- Do the same for Scenario Two, then Three and Four
- Debrief on impressions and lessons learned.

**Scenario One:** Mary is Tom’s administrative assistant. Every morning Tom makes flattering comments about Mary’s appearance.

**Scenario Two:** Mary is Tom’s administrative assistant. Tom invites Mary out for drinks to a singles bar after work. Jess claims not to be available. One week later Tom invites Mary out for drinks after work again.

**Scenario Three:** Mary is Tom’s administrative assistant. Tom is an affectionate person and gently touches the arms of both male and female workers while engaged in conversation. Tom gently touches Mary’s arms three or four times a day.

**Scenario Four:** Mary is Tom’s administrative assistant. Tom receives several unsolicited junk emails a day, including those about improving sexual performance. One of these unsolicited sexual performance emails is quite humorous and Tom forwards the email to Mary.