Letter from the Editor

BY ALBERT J. MILLS

Making Sense of Ice Cream and Sexual Discrimination

The current Fall (2017) issue of the Workplace Review could whimsically be called an issue about making sense of ice cream and sexual discrimination. Neither is particularly funny, but the reference to sensemaking refers to methods of addressing small business concerns and workplace discrimination against women. In the first instance “making sense” refers to the case study method and its value for encouraging scholars and practitioners alike to draw on experience and the logic of the case for identifying problems and opportunities, as readers will see in the case of the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop. In the latter instance, “making sense” refers to the method of focusing on the micro aspects of behaviour as people come to develop a sense or “understanding” of their experiences and how to deal with them. Our issue this fall includes two articles using sensemaking, and two articles tackling the issues of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment.

Making Sense of Corporate Strategy

In the first of our two sensemaking articles, Carmel Teasdale and Amy Thurlow (MSVU) examine how NB Power “makes sense of changes it its role as an electricity provider in a rapidly changing environment.” To that end, they undertake a textual analysis of NB Power’s Reduce and Shift Demand document designed to explain to various stakeholders their shift in market product. Teasdale & Thurlow undertake their analysis of the document using “Weick’s (1979) psycho-social properties of sensemaking” to broaden our understanding of how corporate management is influenced by micro processes, and in turn, devise ways of making sense of change for the customers of NB power. In the process, Carmel and Amy take us through the various sensemaking processes that corporate managers face and draw on in the development of changing strategic directions.

Making Sense of the Experience of Teaching Business

In our second sensemaking paper, Nicholous Deal (SMU) reflects on his experience as a teaching assistant. Like the previous article, Nick draws on Weick’s notion of sensemaking. Given the focus on his own experiences, he also draws on the method of autoethnography to reflect on his teaching practice, and what sensemaking can bring to management teaching. Nick’s exploration of, and reflection on, his experiences through various sensemaking properties encourages us to undertake further research on the links between teaching and sensemaking.

Intervening against Sexual Harassment at Work

In the first of two articles on sexism at work, Jacob Che, Lisa Gibbs, Marla Grady, Laurie Marchbank and Jennifer Spearman (SMU) examine human resource interventions for dealing with sexual harassment. The article is timely as accusations of widespread sexual harassment in Hollywood are hitting the headlines as we go to press. In particular, they review intervention strategies including an “organizational climate intolerant of sexual harassment, proactive policy measure, sexual harassment training, and bystander intervention.” They assess each intervention in turn for its effectiveness, and conclude that in terms of strategies for dealing with sexual harassment, “there is limited evidence as to what works.” They conclude with an appeal to practitioners to “use these findings to become aware of what is currently being done in organizations in response to sexual harassment and what considerations need to be made when implementing strategies.”
The Case of the Missing Women in Management

In our final article, Jennifer Bennett and Wendy R. Carroll (SMU) examine the extent of “representation of women in cases used to teach executive MBA students.” Their findings indicate that “there is a significant underrepresentation of women as senior leaders in the curriculum studied.” They conclude that such case studies can serve to legitimize sexual discrimination through the marginalization of women. This may be particularly so when lack of female representation is a phenomenon across a substantial number of cases.

The Case of the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop

Our case section in this season’s issue presents us with a three-part detailed description and analysis of the development of an ice cream shop. The case takes use through the processes and dynamics of integrated forms of business management issues, explores the break-even analysis, and the management of human resources. Presenting the case, Robert A. MacDonald (Crandall University) provides a series of narratives that are “field researched and decision-based”, designed to place the business student “in entrepreneurial, small business situations.” MacDonald informs us that the case was “developed for application in an introductory business class at the undergraduate level.”

Workplace Review and Peer Review

All the papers in this and earlier editions were originally presented at the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) conference: the five papers in this volume for example, were all presented at the 2016 conference in Halifax (hosted by Saint Mary’s University). As such, papers accepted for publication in the Workplace Review have undergone peer review as part of the ASB submission process. ASB reviewers are drawn from business scholars across the Atlantic region, other areas of Canada, and increasingly, from international scholars. We also welcome submissions of papers that have not been submitted to the ASB conference. In such cases, the papers are sent out for peer review.

To submit a paper for review, please contact Ellen Shaffner, Managing Editor:

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