

Speaker: women executives cut their own throats

By Mary Jo Howe

It's a managerial meeting at a large corporation. Six men and one woman, all managers of equal rank, sit around a conference table with their briefcases before them.

One of the men turns to the woman manager and sweetly says, "Kathy, as long as you're here, why don't you take notes?"

The "assistant" or "secretary" role is just one that women managers often are pushed into, according to Dalia Katilius-Boydston, a psychology department instructor and former personnel manager for Armour-Dial, Co. in Chicago.

Katilius-Boydston discussed pitfalls for women executives in large corporations Wednesday in the Nebraska Union. Her talk was third in the Women/Speak series sponsored by the Student Y.

Corporations still are male-oriented but women executives shouldn't place all the blame for their problems there, Katilius-Boydston said.

In fact, she said, "Women often cut their own throats."

Perpetuate sex roles

During her years as a woman manager she said she has observed many women perpetuating sex roles.

"The woman manager is unique. She is often the only one in her organization, so she feels lonely. She has no camaradene with the filists or the typists or the book-keepers. Neither is she totally accepted by her peers."

The woman manager still wants to be considered attractive and receive attention, but she often gets the wrong kind of attention, Katilius-Boydston said.

Some women try to become one of the boys, she said. Male executives make many decisions on the golf course, in the bathroom and over drinks in a bar.

But if the woman insists on joining in those situations, she is risking gossip, Katilius-Boydston said.

Men are even more sensitive to gossip and won't try to include the woman for fear of angering their wives, she said. So the woman not only misses out on vital information and decision-making, but also the feeling of camaradie with her peers.

"I have no solution to this problem," Katilius-Boydston said. But it is possible for a woman to be a good manager and maintain her femininity.

Labels are common

Some common pitfalls for a woman include becoming labeled as a militant, sexy broad, little girl, kook, mother, or castrated female.

The woman manager needs to be rational, decisive, directive, able to control and lead.



Photo by Bob Pearson

Dalia Katilius-Boydston, psychology department professor, discussed pitfalls for woman executives in large corporations Wednesday in the Nebraska Union in the third part of the Student Y Women/Speak series.

But sometimes, young women especially, can carry these qualities too far and become militant, Katilius-Boydston said. They are socially-aware women aware of the injustices of the male-oriented society, and tend to lay blanket accusations on the entire male sex rather than singling out one person. This forces the men to band together and defend each other, hurting office interpersonal relations, she said.

On the other hand, Katilius-Boydston said women will go along with sex roles just because its easier than resisting.

The "sexy broad" is often an inevitable development, she said, adding that while flirtation appears whenever men and women get together, women should not yield to it.

Branded in role

"The office is a great place for gossip and once a woman gives into the role, she is branded"

Some women fall into the "little girl" role, playing up their helplessness, so men will help her, she continued, criticizing such manipulation of emotions.

"Kooks" will even dress strangely, and make bizarre comments to gain attention, she said.

Older women managers easily slip into the role of "mother" of the office. They are kind and supportive, and men come to them with their problems. But they won't follow "mothers" orders when she tries to exert her managerial powers, Katilius-Boydston explained.

The "castrated woman" becomes manlike, she said. She is rational, tough and refuses to be pushed around. She has completely rejected the woman stereotype in order to be a manager, she said.

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