

FEATURED BOOK REVIEW

Feminist Fight Club: An Office Survival Manual (For a Sexist Workplace)

Reviewed by Jennifer Troutman Bevill
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A few weeks ago while at a stakeholder meeting, I was on the receiving end of what felt like a very offensive and inappropriate comment. In the moment, I felt embarrassed and humiliated and at a total loss for words. I ended up trying to laugh off the comment, but I actually cried over that incident several times that day. My tears were as much about my own frustration with my inability to speak up as they were about what the man actually said. The truth is that this is far from the first time that I had laughed off an appropriate joke in the workplace. I know I'm not alone.

When it came time to write the book review for the GCPA emPOWERing Women Newsletter, I knew that I wanted to pick a book that would help me figure out how to navigate these difficult situations, as well as the myriad of other ways that women in the power industry experience both covert and overt sexism in the workplace. I also knew that I wanted to pick a book that had been written recently and that took a lighthearted approach to such a heavy topic

Feminist Fight Club: An Office Survival Manual (For a Sexist Workplace) by Jessica Bennett was a perfect choice. Freshly published in September 2016, *Feminist Fight Club* is a witty, contemporary, critical yet pragmatic take on how women can survive and thrive in what is, let's face it, still a society dominated by men.

The book begins with Jessica Bennett, now a columnist for *The New York Times*, explaining how, during their early years as struggling career women, she and her friends founded the Feminist Fight Club (aka FFC) as a forum for venting their frustrations and for inspiring one another to never give up. Over the years, the group began to develop strategies for handling everything from "Maninterrupters" (i.e. men who constantly interrupt women) to "Impost-Her Syndrome" (i.e. where we secretly wait for the world to figure we're not that smart) to how to stop devaluing what we say with the words we use to say it (i.e. just stop using the word "just").

The book is broken down into six parts that don't have to be read in order and, I'm happy to say, contains many comical illustrations. Part One is called "Know Thy Enemy" and Jessica (I call her by her first name because I feel like we are friends after reading her book) describes the various ways that sexism shows up in the workplace by turning offenders into characters such as the previously mentioned "Maninterrupter" along with others like the "Mansplainer" and the "Bropropriator."

Part Two is called "Know Thyself" and describes ways we sabotage ourselves in the workplace as actual saboteurs like the "Humble Bragger" and the "Doormat." Part Three, called "Booby Traps", lists many of the office stereotypes and "how to hack 'em." Part Four is called "Get Your Speak" and identifies ways we disempower ourselves by how we communicate and tells us what to do instead. Part Five, my favorite, is titled "F You, Pay Me" and provides specific scripts on how to negotiate your starting salary, pay raise and/or promotion. Finally, in Part Six, Jessica describes a game she and her FFC play called "WWJD – What Would Josh Do?" For any work situation, what would a mediocre, overly confident white dude do?

Overall, FFC is a great book written by a highly intelligent woman. It was a quick and highly entertaining read but also very informative, packed with a lot of statistical data and facts that Jessica has researched and studied. If I have any critique, it would be that the author doesn't speak to years of systematic oppression that have resulted in many women literally not feeling safe enough to follow her suggestions. However, don't let that stop you from reading it because it absolutely provided what I was looking for, which was how to respond – in the moment – to inappropriate comments at work.

Furthermore, I'm going to take some of the material from the FFC, along with other relevant sources, and create a workshop for GCPA emPOWERing Women in the first quarter of 2017. Tentatively titled "Real-Life Feminist Fight Club," the workshop will be focused on teaching other women how to respond to inappropriate jokes (or behaviors) in the workplace. There will be role-play. There will be laughter. Hopefully, you will walk away knowing exactly what you want to say in those awkward and disempowering moments.

Look for details on the Real-Life FFC Workshop soon!

EmPOWERing the Future with \$20,000+ in Scholarships

**By Barbara Clemenhagen
Vice President, Market Intelligence
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The reach of the GCPA emPOWERing Women program goes well beyond the simple elements of time and effort that we put into the support, program development and networking opportunities for women currently working in the electric power industry. **We invest in the future.** We proactively encourage and inspire younger women pursuing technical degrees to consider careers in the electric power arena through mentorship and our Scholarship program.

The GCPA emPOWERing Foundation Women's Scholarship Program was established in 2013 with a \$2,500 Scholarship for a student in the Women in Engineering (WEP) program at the Cockrell School of Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). With a goal to assist women with an expressed interest in pursuing a career in the electric power industry, the GCPA emPOWERing Women Scholarship Program has blossomed from that single \$2,500 scholarship to an annual offering of over \$20,000 for a variety of scholarships to female students enrolled in universities and technical schools in the Gulf Coast region.

The GCPA emPOWERing Women's Scholarship recipients are selected based upon merit by faculty members at our partner universities and the scholarships are awarded annually. Our initial partnership with UT Austin expanded in 2014 to include a scholarship at the McCombs School of Business for an MBA student with an interest in the electricity power industry. This year, we will award scholarships at seven gulf region universities and one independent school district.

The 2016 GCPA emPOWERing Foundation Women's Scholarships included: the two UT Austin scholarships, one for a female student working towards a Juris Doctor at the University of Houston Law Center, two for female engineering students at Texas A&M University's School of Engineering and the University of Texas at Arlington School of Engineering, and scholarships for young women in the Louisiana State University College of Engineering and the Tulane Energy Institute in partnership with the A.B. Freeman School of Business. We will also award scholarships for top performing students from high schools in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) through the Atlas Scholars program.

The 2016 Recipients to date:

- Louisiana State University College of Engineering (\$2,500): Cassidy Hebert, a Junior in Electrical Engineering who worked on a research project on electrically powered vehicles and their integration into the modern transportation system.
- Texas A&M University's School of Engineering (\$2,500): Leah Murff, a Sophomore in in Electrical Engineering who wants to advance solar energy technologies and improve the efficiency of power generation and distribution.

- Tulane Energy Institute (\$2,500): Jennifer Boudreaux, a Petroleum Engineering student.
- University of Houston Law Center (\$2,500): Li Yi Money Penny, a third year Juris Doctor student who will be working in-house at Shell Oil Company.
- Women in Engineering (WEP) UT Austin (\$1,225 x 2): Maddie Drake, senior in Electrical Engineering with a focus on power and energy systems and Mary Thuy Linh Vu, the current President of the IEEE Power & Energy Society.
- McCombs School of Business (\$2,500): Lilia Delgado, a first year Master of Business Administration student with a concentration in Energy Finance.
- UT Arlington Women in Engineering (\$1,225 x 2): Rosalina Liceria and PhuongAnh Thuy Do.

Scholarships are funded through fundraising events as well as tax-deductible gifts to the program. For more information, please go to the GCPA website page [emPOWERing Students](#).

GCPA emPOWERing Women 3rd Annual Leadership Conference

The 3rd Annual emPOWERing Women Leadership Conference was a great success - many thanks to all our speakers and enthusiastic participants! The conference not only provided great learning opportunities from experts but also raised more than \$20K in scholarship funds for female students who have expressed interest in pursuing a career in the electric power industry. In case you missed it, speakers explored a variety of topics including why diversity matters, leaders as storytellers, how unconscious bias influences the choice of leaders, why women leaders matter and how families fostered successful careers while also raising children. GCPA members can view conference presentations at www.gulfcoastpower.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cocktail Reception in New Orleans
**Co-hosted by GCPA emPOWERing Women and Women's
Energy Network (WEN) Southern Louisiana**
February 15th, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, NOLA French Quarter

This reception is being held in conjunction with the [GCPA MISO South Regional Conference](#) on Feb. 16. Watch for an email with registration details for the reception!

[Join our Mailing List:](#) If you are interested in receiving email notifications re GCPA emPOWERing Women events and opportunities – [CLICK HERE](#).

[Join the GCPA emPOWERing Women LinkedIn Group:](#) Interact with other women, post items of interest and keep up with GCPA emPOWERing Women events – [CLICK HERE](#) to join.