



Equal Shift: Exploring equality and non-discrimination through a workplace story



Main topic & European value

- ◆ **Core topics:** Non-discrimination and gender equality in everyday working life, focusing on how unequal treatment can build up gradually through small, individually defensible decisions rather than a single obvious act of prejudice. The game uses a local manufacturing cooperative's shift and promotion system as the testing ground.
- ◆ **European values:** Equality, with supporting threads of dignity (the right to be treated and assessed fairly) and rule of law (the use of transparent, evidence-based, and accountable procedures rather than informal habit).



Educational objectives

- ✓ Explain how unequal treatment in a workplace can arise from accumulated small decisions, not only from deliberate prejudice.
- ✓ Identify concrete evidence-gathering methods for recognising patterns of unfair treatment, such as pay and shift records.
- ✓ Evaluate a manager's resistance to change with nuance, distinguishing legitimate operational concerns from discriminatory intent.
- ✓ Apply principles of equality and dignity to propose a fair, workable solution that a whole team can accept.
- ✓ Reflect on the responsibility of bystanders and allies in recognising and addressing unequal treatment.



Scenario overview

The player joins a local manufacturing cooperative for a short workplace placement, supported by Fred, the HR coordinator.

Within the first week, a coworker, Petra, quietly mentions that she and several others seem to be repeatedly assigned the lower-paid early shifts and passed over for senior tasks, despite equal experience. No single decision looks unfair on its own, and Floor Manager Erik insists the system has simply “always worked this way.”

The player's placement task becomes a genuine investigation: review records, listen to coworkers, and bring a fair, evidence-based proposal to the manager and the wider team. Erik is not portrayed as cruel or biased on purpose; he is cautious, protective of an existing team, and worried that fast changes could disrupt output or unsettle experienced staff.

Over four exploration quests, the records room, the break room, the floor office, and review day, the player builds a case, tests it under pressure, and helps design a shift and promotion policy the whole cooperative can stand behind.

The game does not present the manager as an enemy to defeat, but as a colleague to convince with evidence, patience, and respect.



Core mechanics & tasks

- ◆ **Exploration map:** the player moves around a top-down cooperative map (records room, production floor, break room, floor office) typical of RPG Maker-style design, unlocking new areas as quests are completed.
- ◆ **NPC quests:** each main location offers a short quest involving dialogue, light data-review tasks, and gathering testimony or documentation from coworkers.

- ◆ **Evidence meter:** a tracker reflecting the strength and breadth of the player's evidence, built through thorough, respectful information-gathering rather than speed.
- ◆ **Trust meter:** tracks standing with both coworkers and the floor manager; the strongest ending requires reasonable trust from both sides, not victory over either.
- ◆ Tasks include:
 - ✓ Quest 1: Review pay and shift records;
 - ✓ Quest 2: Gather coworker testimony in the break room;
 - ✓ Quest 3: Present findings and negotiate a trial policy with the floor manager;
 - ✓ Quest 4: Report results and help finalise a lasting fairness policy on review day.



Player role

The player is **Sasha**, an 18-year-old on a short workplace placement at the cooperative. Sasha begins with no fixed opinion about who is right, only a placement brief asking them to support a fair review of the shift system. As the investigation unfolds, the player has genuine agency, choosing how thoroughly to gather evidence, how to approach coworkers, and how to frame the final proposal to the floor manager and the team. The player's choices shape both the Evidence meter and the Trust meter, determining which ending the game reaches.



NPC profiles

Name	Role in the story & function in the gameplay	Personality traits
Fred	Mentor and HR coordinator at the cooperative. Has worked there for over a decade and keeps careful records of pay, shifts, and promotions. Guides the player	Methodical, calm, quietly persistent. Believes fairness is proven with evidence, not assumed. Encourages the

	through the records quests, explaining how unequal treatment can build up gradually through many small, individually defensible decisions.	player to check facts before drawing conclusions.
Petra	Ally and machine-floor worker. Has noticed she is repeatedly passed over for the better-paid evening shifts and senior tasks, often with vague explanations. Helps the player understand daily life on the floor and introduces them to other workers willing to share their experiences.	Hard-working, observant, cautiously hopeful. Reluctant to make a formal complaint alone, for fear of being labelled difficult, but relieved when someone takes her concerns seriously.
Floor Manager Erik	Opponent (nuanced). Has run the production floor for many years using shift and task assignments inherited from his predecessor. Worries that changing the system quickly could disrupt output, upset experienced staff, or expose the cooperative to costs it cannot absorb. Not motivated by prejudice, but by caution and habit.	Practical, set in his ways, protective of the team he has built. Responds to clear evidence and workable proposals rather than accusations. Willing to change once shown that fairness and efficiency are not in conflict.



Dialogue options, choices & consequences

Dialogue or dilemma	Available options (2-3)	Short-term & long-term consequences
Quest 1 (The Records Room): Fred shows the player two ways to begin the review - a quick look at this month's pay slips, or a deeper	- Review only this month's pay slips, for a fast but limited snapshot. - Review twelve months of shift and promotion records, for a fuller pattern despite taking longer.	- Quick to finish, but the evidence is thin and easy for Manager Erik to dismiss later. - Slower, but the player uncovers a clear pattern of unequal shift assignment; this option provides the



look at twelve months of shift and promotion records. The player must choose where to start.	Ask Fred to summarise the data verbally instead of reviewing it directly.	strongest evidence for later quests. Saves time, but Fred notes that second-hand summaries will carry less weight at the council table.
Quest 2 (The Break Room): Petra introduces the player to other workers during the break. Some are eager to speak, others are wary of being seen talking about pay or favouritism. The player decides how to approach the conversations.	- Ask everyone the same direct questions in front of the whole group, for speed. - Speak with each worker privately, at their own pace, and let them choose how much to share. - Rely only on Petra's account and skip speaking with anyone else.	- Several workers shut down or give vague answers; useful detail is lost and Petra is visibly uncomfortable. - Takes longer, but workers share more openly; the player gathers detailed, credible testimony and Petra's trust grows. - Faster, but Manager Erik later argues the complaint rests on a single perspective.
Quest 3 (The Floor Office): The player presents findings to Manager Erik, who raises concerns that changing the shift system quickly could disrupt output and upset experienced staff. He asks the player to respond on the spot.	- Insist the system is unfair and demand immediate changes with no transition plan. - Acknowledge his concerns and propose a short trial period with clear, measurable fairness criteria. - Suggest dropping the matter to avoid conflict with the floor's senior staff.	- Erik feels attacked rather than informed; he becomes defensive and the proposal loses momentum. - Erik's trust grows; this option opens the strongest path toward a fair, lasting policy change. - Petra and other workers lose confidence that anything will change; morale on the floor declines.



Quest 4 (Review Day): The trial period ends. The player presents the results to the whole cooperative and decides how to frame the new shift and promotion policy going forward.	○ Present the policy as a personal win over Manager Erik. ○ Present the policy as a shared improvement, crediting the evidence, the workers who spoke up, and Erik's willingness to adjust. ○ Quietly adopt the policy without explaining why it changed.	○ Erik feels publicly blamed; cooperation on future issues becomes harder to secure. ○ Strongest overall outcome: the policy is broadly accepted, trust is high across the floor, and a recurring fairness review is adopted. ○ The policy holds for now, but without a clear explanation, workers remain unsure whether it will last.
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Summary, debriefing & reflection questions

After completing the game, consider the following questions:

- ◆ How can unequal treatment build up through small decisions that each seem reasonable on their own?
- ◆ Manager Erik's concerns were not based on prejudice. What made his objections legitimate, even where you disagreed with them?
- ◆ How did the way you approached coworkers in the break room affect both the quality of evidence and their willingness to trust you?
- ◆ How might a real workplace or school in your own community recognise and address a similar pattern of unequal treatment?



References & additional resources

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