



Video Story Transcript

Small City, Big City: Opportunities Grow with More Diversity

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka-7IQOVFhQ>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

My name is Shannon Cason. I worked at a plumbin' wholesale company in Flint, Michigan. Flint, Michigan is a predominately black city and ah, I was the only black man working in a region. I don't even know how that happens. But I, I was working there. And many times I used that kind of opportunity to stand out and give a different perspective. And I remember we went out for a drink one day, and we were talkin' about demanding customers and, and how, ah, warehouse issues and after that the conversation turned to like NASCAR, deer huntin' and cabins up north. And I didn't really have a breadth of knowledge about any of those conversations topics. I'm just a city kid from Detroit so I really didn't really know about those topics. And I just, I love learning and listening to new things. So I just listened in. And after a time frame, I felt like I could chime in or somethin'. So, I say, "You know, I remember when my grandmother took me up north to Mackinac Island to the Lilac Festival." And no one seemed to really care about that conversation. Everybody just ordered another drink. And it kind of just drifted off into, into space. So I felt like, you know, it's an uncomfortable place to feel isolated at work and not have certain connections. And, ah, at the job, it kind of went the same way. I wasn't connecting. Ah, my mistakes seem like they were magnified because where other people, we would take these long orders, very long orders, and you'd miss some things, you know, and the mistakes that I made, seemed like they were larger than life. You know, other people can kind of gloss over a mistake or just kind of like laugh about it or crack a joke because of familiarity or, or connection and I didn't have that.

So, it got to the point where I was put on a 90-day probation. I never really hadn't any bad reviews or anything like that. And, ah, I, I remember I moved with my new wife, closer to this job. So I didn't tell her about the probation. And I was, I was nervous about it. So I started looking for new jobs. Then a new job came and it

wasn't my job. My wife had got a promotion and the promotion was in Chicago, Illinois. And I had to go in to my boss, who had put me on probation, and ask him for this transfer. And it was challenging to get the transfer. He said, ah, um, that there was really no positions for me available in Chicago. And that if I was to move to Chicago, I would have to take a demotion from inside sales to counter sales. And I was looking for new jobs anyway, so I took the job in counter sales because it's better to have a job than no job. And I moved to Chicago.

And I remember when I started up, it was totally different in Chicago. I went into the building and it was a really diverse situation. You had men, women, Latino, black, white, ah, seniors, younger people. Um, forklifts whizzing by, order pickers high up in the air, racks up to the ceiling, 15 trucks out front, just right in front of the building. And I remember my manager, he was a black man. He shook my hand, showed me to the counter, and said, "Do a good job." And I did. And I was making good connections with the people in the warehouse, customers; cracking jokes with them, having fun and making good sales.

And after time on the counter, I remember my boss came back out to me, and we walked in front of the building. And we were talking right in front of that rows of trucks, and he was saying that he had he was skeptical about initially hiring me because of the bad report I had from my, my former boss. But he was happy to see the improvement in my, in my performance. And he was telling me that there was a position openin' up for shippin' manager and he wanted me to take that position. I had never had any experience with managing 15 union drivers. But he said he'd think I'd do a good job.

And I think I did. I went into the shippin' management position. And as a shipping manager, that's like one of the most important positions because you, you, you, everyone in the company knows you, all the sales people know you, all the top management knows you, every part that has to get to customers in all of Chicagoland comes through me. I mean, it's a big deal. We shipped all the Kohler parts to the Trump Tower. So it's really big deal.

And I remember, ah, one more challenge. So after the shippin' position, I asked for another position. And they put me back into sales. And I worked in sales for six months. Then I got my own facility. So I have my own building, with my own shippin' and trucks and everything. And, ah, and I would sit in my manager meetin's, with my old boss who believed in me. And he would mentor me on leadership but we would also talk about the Bulls winnin' a game or we would talk about, ah, places downtown that plays the best blues music. So those types of things where we have a relationship. And, ah, they had this corporate-wide meetin'... was in another state. All the, all the facility managers from all over the country were there: Las Vegas, San Francisco, Chicago, even Flint, Michigan. And I ran into my, my old boss, the guy who I didn't connect with and, ah, we'd never really, he gave me a bad review, and put me on probation, and gave me a bad recommendation, and I ran into him. And I had my own facility at this time, 'n mine was a lot bigger than he is, about three times the sales of his facility. And I remember, we talked and we talked about the challenges of running our own plumbing wholesale company and we were related, finally. And it was, it was a cool experience.

So, I just want to say, like if you, if, if it's times when, when you're in a com, uncomfortable situation sometimes you have to take the risk, to jump out into a more comfortable situation for your personality.

So, thank you.