

The McKenzie Mailer

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Have a great
Valentine's Day

Be sure to remember
your loved ones.

CONGRATULATIONS
TO

BONNIE BARNES

**WHO WAS NAMED
THE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR FOR THE
ST. JOHNS VISION
EFFECTIVE
FEBRUARY 1, 2006**

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HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

It's Valentines Day with all of the obligatory articles about love in the workplace and whether dating in the workplace should be banned. The Society for Human Resource Management in conjunction with CareerJournal.com has just released a study which indicates that over 70% of the organizations do not have a policy on workplace romances. This writer believes that these companies are playing with fire.

Trying to legislate the heart is impossible and many long-lasting relationships have originated in the workplace, so it is not reasonable to assume that just because a company has a rule in place that states co-workers cannot date each other does not mean that it won't happen. With the increasing awareness of potential sexual harassment charges, many companies have instituted non-fraternization policies that spell out the procedures to take in the event of an office romance. There can be dangerous outcomes when relationships go bad in the workplace. Therefore, it may be a good idea to put a policy in place. Here are a couple of things to include in your policy:

Reporting Relationships – When the romance involves a supervisor and subordinate, then the person in the supervisory position should be required to inform his/her boss of the relationship so changes in the reporting structure can be made. Having a reporting relationship on the work site, as well as a romantic one after hours, is a conflict of interest. Failure to make a change in the reporting structure causes all types of problems. A perception of favoritism cannot be avoided which usually causes major morale problems with the other workers. In addition, more of these relationships end in a break up than marriage. If one of the parties wants to continue the relationship and the other doesn't, harassment may result if the couple's differences are brought into the workplace. Even though the romantic relationship was consensual, once there is a break up, the nature of the relationship is no longer welcomed to one of the parties involved. Remember that the EEOC definition of sexual harassment includes "unwelcomed" advances.

Behavior – Love in the workplace can be a wonderful thing, but open or public displays of affection should not be tolerated. There is nothing more unprofessional than two people playing kissie-face in a cubicle or calling each other cutsie nick names.

Illicit Affairs – The affair between people who are married to others can be career ending. No matter how secret people try to make their illicit relationship, everyone in the workplace knows about it. The best advice is to never let this happen to you. It is a huge mistake that can be a career ending and should be avoided at all costs.

Although you cannot legislate the heart, you can legislate behavior after the heart takes over.