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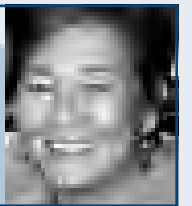
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## WORKING MATTERS

by JACKIE DAVID, Public Information, Public Works



### Does Dating at Work Ever Work?



#### ■ Is dating someone from work a good idea for single people?

Dating someone at the office: We hear about it. We know about it. We may have experienced it. We may be in it. Whatever the case, statistics show that up to 80 percent of employees in America are involved in or know someone involved in a workplace romance. Does that make it right? Is what was once taboo now acceptable?

Here are some telling statistics:

- More than 70 percent of single employees will become romantically involved with someone on the job at some point in their career.
- According to Career Builder's "Office Romance" Survey, more than 55 percent of workers have dated someone who worked in the same company.
- According to Vault.com's 2003 survey, 47 percent of workers admit to having been involved in an office romance; and
- 19 percent admit they would be willing to participate if the opportunity arose.
- The American Management Association's survey of managers who dated someone from work indicated that: 44 percent said their relationships led to marriage;
- 23 percent had a long-term relationship; and
- 33 percent had a short-term relationship.
- More than 8 million new office romances start each year (according to a 1994 study).
- A recent survey by Glamour magazine and Lawyers.com indicated that 41 percent of Americans (aged 25-40) have had an office relationship; and
- 75 percent felt that office romance was acceptable.

*The Society for Human Resource Management Workplace Romance Survey* (1998) showed the following average results following a workplace romance:

- 55 percent: marriage
- 28 percent: complaints of favoritism from co-workers and those involved in the romance
- 24 percent: sexual harassment claims
- 24 percent: decreased productivity by those involved in the romance
- 17 percent: complaints of retaliation when the romance ended
- 16 percent: decreased morale of co-workers of those involved in the romance
- 12 percent: complaints of stalking when the romance ended
- 11 percent: decreased productivity by co-workers of those involved in the romance.

If we are to follow statistics, one can only assume that romance in the workplace is alive and well. Several factors seem to come together to lead to the inevitable:

- More employees put their career first and wait until they are older to get married. That provides a workplace with more single and eligible employees. (Some have even referred to the workplace as the "new single's bar.")
- Women now comprise around half of the workforce. There is more opportunity for interaction.
- More time spent on the job or longer work hours foster more personal relationships.
- The "team" concept encourages close working relationships between team members.
- The workplace is full of people who are compatible: Employees who work on the same projects most likely share the same educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, share the same interests, hopes, goals and feel the same job pressures – all conducive factors to a romantic relationship.

So, how does one carry on a workplace romance without sabotaging a career? The answer, albeit simple, takes a lot of discipline and self-control: **Maintain your respect by keeping your office romance on a professional level:**

- Know your company's policy regarding office romance.
- Approach any office relationship with caution. Be discreet at the first sign of flirtation and think through the consequences in case things don't work out.
- Never get involved with someone in your direct chain of command.
- Confine your romantic attachment to someone who is a peer rather than someone above or below your rank. (The best office-dating scenario is when peers from different departments date.)
- Be discreet. Don't flaunt your romance. Avoid public displays of affection. Refrain from sexual behavior on the job. Always appear professional.
- Do not allow your romance to interfere with your productivity or with your willingness to be a team player.
- Do not use company e-mail to send anything other than strictly work-related messages.
- Talk with each other about how you will handle work and your relationship if things don't work out.
- Remember that people do break up. Have a backup career plan in case things don't work out and you need to look for a different job.