

WORKPLACE LAW: IS IT LOVE OR SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

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Time was, the only risk flowing from a workplace romance was the possibility of gossip and an occasional sexually transmitted disease. Nowadays, however, a poorly-considered date with a co-worker can amount to career suicide. This is due to the ever-expanding definition of sexual harassment and the increasing tendency of some jilted lovers to use the harassment laws as a weapon for revenge.

Workplace romances can present problems. On one hand, many marriages and legitimate romances are sparked among co-workers, and it's difficult for an employer to write – let alone enforce – a company policy that keeps employees from falling in love. But employers can and must enforce rules against sexual harassment. And employees, especially managers, have to use exceptionally good judgment when becoming romantically involved with a colleague, and, if it applies, determining how such a relationship will end. A workplace romance ending without tact and sensitivity could be just the beginning of a lawsuit.

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