

# OFFICE ROMANCES: HOW EMPLOYERS CAN AVOID THE STING OF CUPID'S ARROW

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As Valentine's Day approaches, employers will likely be reminded that Cupid is alive and well in the American workplace. According to the results of job website *Vault.com's* 2010 survey on office romance, almost 60% of workers said they have engaged in a workplace romance. In addition, almost 64% of those surveyed said that after having had an office relationship once, they would do it again. Employers should not expect these numbers to decrease. With the amount of time people spend at work, contrasted with the decrease in people's leisure time, the workplace has become the most convenient and most practical place to meet romantic partners. Such relationships are not always casual and disastrous another study reported that roughly 20% result in long-term relationships or even marriage. In fact, the author of this article met his spouse at the office.

Many office romances, however, are casual and fleeting relationships that have the potential to end badly. Such relationships can poison a workplace and result in difficult-to-defend sexual harassment claims. In these situations, an employer may find itself facing allegations that what once may have appeared to be a consensual relationship was really a coerced quid pro quo relationship in which sexual relations were demanded by a supervisor in exchange for promotions or continued employment. Thus, office romances can be risky in terms of liability. Savvy employers can avoid liability, or at least reduce the chances of major legal problems, through policies that are focused on employees' professional conduct.

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