

Dating in the workplace essay



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Dating in the Workplace Executive Summary The ethical dilemma introduced in this paper is a popular one: Dating in the Workplace. It is an issue that has grabbed the attention of the media, and it has the power to ruin an organization if not dealt with correctly. This paper will raise awareness of the rewards and risks of dating relationships in a work environment. Introduction Above all, this paper will answer two important questions: What are the primary and secondary ethical issues of concern to corporate leaders? And how are universities addressing these issues? In the first question, the following issues will be addressed in this order: productivity, sexual harassment, reputation, internal effects, and corporate scandals. The second question will address two approaches that universities are handling these ethical issues.

The first approach is an assertive approach, and the second approach is a passive approach. Background and Overview Dating in the Workplace is an issue that needs to be addressed. This paper is presented in such a way that research is the primary factor and source for the writing, while opinion of the writers is not emphasized. The goal of the paper is to present the facts through due diligence and sound research and let the reader decide on their viewpoint and where they stand on the issue. The Primary and Secondary Ethical Issues of Concern to Corporate Leaders Productivity Relationships in the workplace can put strains on not only work performance but also put strain on the individuals involved.

According to former editor of the Harvard Business Review, Eliza Collins, declared in 1983 that when love blossoms between executives, it can “break down the organizational structure” and should be treated as a conflict

of interest between the couple and corporation (Loftus, 1995, p. 1). Charles A. Pierce tells us that workplace relationships have been argued about and not managerial concerns unless they disrupt job performance (Pierce, 1996, p. 4). Pierce goes on to tell us that a few researches on relationships in the workplace actually increasing productivity (Pierce, 1996, p.

14). In a research paper by Carolyn I. Anderson and Phillip L. Hunsaker found that nine percent of males and 21% of females showed an increase in productivity, where as 24% of women and 14% of men showed a reduction in productivity with the remaining not showing any change in performance (Anderson, 1985, p.

1). Jane Quinn a columnist for the Seattle Post - Intelligencer tells us that about 25% of all individuals involved with work place romance showed a drop in productivity (Jane p1.). So either way you look at romance in the work place it can be a positive event or it can be a negative event. In the Anderson and Hunsaker Survey 70 percent of the decreased productivity was due to excessive employee chatting, Long Lunches together, and Lengthy discussions behind closed doors (Anderson, 1985, p.

1). R. C. Ford and F.

S. McLaughlin did a survey about how workplace relations ships not only affect the people involved but also how it affects those around them there findings were that 31 percent of partners agreed that they had a drop in productivity and 39 percent of co-workers said that they feel that they have been affected negatively due to the couples relationship (Ford, 1987, p. 105). E. Rapp in survey found similar results with a 42 percent of couples

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found that their productivity has decreased and 39 percent of co-workers had been negatively affected by the couple's relationship (Rapp, 1992, p. 9).

Although there is a lot of surveys and reports on how personal relationships in the workplace have a negative effect on productivity and quality of individuals and their co-workers, it is not always negative. Sometimes it can be a positive effect. Just like any other relationships, workplace relationships go through phases. According to the Academy of Management Review article by L. Mainiero, it suggests that the first stage of romance is that of "mutual sexual attraction," which usually lasts from approximately 0 months to 12 months. After that time period, the couple usually gets over the newness of the relationship and begins to focus on the relationship and back to increased productivity. (Mainiero, 1986, p. 756). In a survey by Dillard and Broetzmann, it was found that those who are sincere about joining into a serious partnership based on love tend to see a great increase in productivity.

Whereas those based on "ego motives, or the desire for excitement, adventure, security, power, financial rewards, and lighter work loads," show a higher percentage of negative performance (Dillard, 1989, p. 7). Also at times we find that productivity and morale will increase due to the fact that many couples are more willing to put extra hours in at work so that they may spend more time together. Mainiero saw about a 33 percent increase in worker motivation, whereas in the Dillard and Broetzmann survey, 40 percent of men and 57 percent of women showed an increase in work-related motivation (Mainiero, 1986, p. 755, and Dillard, 1989, p.

99). So the consequences of work place relationships can be both bad and good. It just depends on how the individuals wish to take it if they plan for it to be a serious relationship then the chances are probably good that it will increase morale and productivity, if it is for reasons other than that then the chances are good that the relationship will affect poorly on not only the couple involved but also the co-workers and those around them in a negative manor. Sexual Harassment and Reputation Many people fear that asking a co-worker on a date may cause some form of sexual harassment. In reality it is quite legal to ask a coworker out on a date as long as it follows the company's policy.

Recent court rulings regarding sexual harassment has left most employers and employees feeling confused about what is and what is not sexual harassment between co-workers. Regardless with the confusion many people start a relationship in the workplace and things start to become tricky. Karen Sutherland an author who wrote the article called " Dating in the Workplace: Avoiding a Harassment Claim from a Relationship Gone Sour" states that " workplace protections against sexual harassment have grown much stronger in recent years" (Sutherland, 2007, p. 1). This means that if you go on a date with a co-worker it okay but after the breakup certain conditions can cause sexual harassment. Some of the examples that causes sexual harassment are " when a relationship ends, if one member of the former couple continues to pursue the other member at work after a breakup to try to " patch things up," the employer can be found liable for sexual harassment" stated by the author.

Sutherland also stated that, " Public displays of affection, even among consenting adults who are dating each other, can create an atmosphere that encourages other employees to engage in conduct that can constitute sexual harassment. Dating in the workplace can cause reputation in a bad or good way. Denise Kersten the author of " Office romances can be risky; rewarding" (Kersten, 2002, p. 1) lets us know that that relationship dating can bring out office gossip, jealousy, tension and a lack of space, and the possibility you'll have to keep working with your co-worker after a breakup. When two people are dating one of the main consequences is that people will find out eventually that the two people were dating. Internal Effects and Corporate Scandals Romance in the workplace is something that is certain to happen.

We all know of employees that have been involved in a workplace relationship at some point. Some questions that are debatable are: Is it right or wrong? Does the management have the right to interfere? Are there any policies to check on such interactions? Relationships in the workplace can cause a lot of trouble for the organization. It raises complaints of favoritism; it results in decrease of productivity and morale. People spend much of their lives at work. According to a survey, 70 % of employees become romantically involved with someone they work with at some point of their career (Roy, 2008, p. 1).

Employees who are single meet new singles at the workplace and those that are married have affairs at work and conduct extramarital affairs. They end up sharing hobbies, interests, personalities, and intimacies. It is known that men and women who work closely under stressful conditions can quickly get

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attracted to each other. As these relationships grow productivity suffers, quality of output decreases, and those involved in the relationship become the subject of gossip, and also the office romance can lead to preferential treatment with assignments, promotions, raises by which the co-workers get offended. However; if the relationship deteriorates the consequences are even worse.

It creates an awkward situation if the two still have to work at the same place. One could harm the other in response or stalk them or even be physically violent. It can get even worse if the one involved are married to someone else outside the workplace. Workplace romance can cause a lot of serious problems, public embarrassment, and can also be harmful for the career. No matter how hard one works their will always be a speculation whether the raise or the promotion was a reward for sexual favors. In addition, if men, who are at higher levels in the organization, get romantically involved with a subordinate woman then the men can be subject to a sexual harassment suit if the woman claims later that she had been pressured into the relationship for fear of her job.

On the other side, if you date your boss and the relationship ends badly then unpleasant actions take place. The boss has the ability to undermine the subordinate's career. Workplace romance receives extensive media coverage, especially when it involves a public figure which makes it an even more serious issue. It effects the company's reputation and can lead to firing those involved. For instance, the President and CEO of American Red Cross, Mark W. Everson was asked to resign after it was learned that he had an affair with a female subordinate.

In another case, the CEO of Boeing, Harry Stonecipher had to resign because he had an affair with a female executive (Houston, 2005, p. 1). According to another survey, 55% of Americans have been involved in workplace romance of which 49% resulted in long-term relationship or marriage. Furthermore, it was also found that these workplace romances reduce the organizations productivity by 50% (Meyer, 2005, p.

). The cost of corporate scandals has been a major concern for company liability. A lot of employers strongly discourage office romances because if there is a breakup it affects everyone else in the office. “ Love contracts” are becoming the new approach to workplace romance.

Some companies require the people involved in the relationship to sign this agreement which states that their relationship is voluntary. The agreements clarify that the relationship is mutually agreeable and is not related to the company. However; these agreements will not prevent company losses or employee morale if the relationship ends. How Universities are Addressing This Issue There are a number of ways that universities across the nation are addressing the dilemma regarding work center romance.

I have identified a trend upon doing research regarding this ethical dilemma. This trend creates two approaches in tackling the ethical dilemma in workplace romantics. The two popular ways used to address what schools are doing about workplace romantics are broken down into two categories. For the purpose of this research paper, I have decided to name the categories for ease of identification. The assertive and the passive approaches will be suitable names for the categories.

Assertive Approach Some universities or institutions already have established policies. These are known as the more assertive approaches. Usually they state that staff and students may not be in romantic relationships and can both be dismissed for violations. The reprimands that follow these violations may seem harsh but they must uphold a higher standard. Another assertive approach would be one where thinking outside of the box is employed. Doing this makes learning fun and competitive.

At the Illinois Institute of Technology, a recent tradition was created where students compete in an ethics bowl. “ The Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) combines the excitement and fun of a competitive tournament with a valuable educational experience for undergraduate students. On February 21, 2008, thirty-two teams, representing different colleges and universities, participated in the IEB National Championship Competition, which took place in San Antonio, in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE). The team from Clemson University (SC) emerged as the winner in a superb final match with the runner-up team from Wright State University (OH). ” (Landensen, 2008, p. 4).

According to Landensen, this tournament took place right here in San Antonio and this is how it works: In the IEB, a moderator poses questions to teams of three to five students. Questions may concern ethical problems on wide ranging topics, such as the classroom (e. g. cheating or plagiarism), personal relationships (e.

g. dating or friendship), professional ethics (e. g. engineering, law, medicine), or social and political ethics (e. g.

free speech, gun control, etc. Each team receives a set of ethical issues in advance of the competition, and questions posed to teams at the competition are taken from that set. A panel of judges evaluates answers; rating criteria are intelligibility, focus on ethically relevant considerations, avoidance of ethical irrelevance, and deliberative thoughtfulness. (p. 4).

This is a great example of how some 32 universities handle ethical topics like dating in the workplace, plus so much more. Finding creative ways to apply ethical dilemma problem solving to situations like these allow students the opportunity to apply theories that they would only be able to read about. Certain local San Antonio universities for a specific career goal will provide ethics courses that apply towards the said career. Obviously, the University of Texas at San Antonio offers the course titled “ GBA 2013: Social and Ethical Issues in Business” as part of their core curriculum for all students in their College of Business (UTSA, 2006, p. 1).

They have done an excellent job considering that one of their Professors, Dr. Heller, has had text on ethical dilemmas published and used as the required textbook for the course. This is just one example for a local university in the business field, and another example is in the medical field. The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio is offering a specific course for their student’s future ethical encounters as well: “ NURS 4203: The Nurse as a Professional: Issues and Ethics” dives deeply with students on current key issues such as patient rights and physician assisted suicide (UTHSCSA, 2008, p. 1) .

Another example for accountants is that the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy approved ethics courses for those wanting to be a Certified Public Accountant. The strict criteria for the courses as shown by Board Rule 511. 8 imply that the ethics courses meet the highest standard for the business world (Treacy, 2008, p. 1). The ruling makes sure there are a variety of prerequisite courses available in Texas Universities such as ACCT 7401: Ethics for Professional Accountants, BUS 435: Christian Business Ethics, and ACC 6321: Ethical Solutions in Professional Accounting. These are just some ways Universities are preventing harmful situations from happening in future workplace environments.

However, on the other end of the scope there is the more lax side or passive approach. Passive Approach Having no policy at all is a passive approach. Most universities are dealing the issue that there are a low percentage of corporations that soon-to-be graduates will become included in the workforce where there are no perceived policy. “ Merrick Rossein, a law professor at City University of New York in Flushing, estimates 25 percent of companies in recent years have developed policies on consensual relationships among colleagues.

” (Harris, 2005, p. 1). The passive approach may include a very lax policy but in reality if somebody violates a restriction by dating a co-worker nothing would be done. Managers should establish employee policies stating exactly what will and will not be tolerated when it comes to interoffice relationships and follow through with reprimands if any violations occur. “ Recently, universities across the country have been changing (or adding) policies addressing student-professor relationships.

Most recently, Iowa State University, Syracuse University and the University of New Mexico have instituted no tolerance policies towards these relationships — and these schools are not alone. Tufts have had a policy against professor-student dating since 1992. The policy applies to any professor regarding any student whom he or she “ instructs, evaluates, supervises, or advises, or over whom he/she is in a position to exercise authority in any way. ” (Lifschultz, 2003, p. 1).

This type of rationalizing is much like the FEMA organization that took too long to get into gear when actually needed during the Katrina Hurricane. And it could have been avoided if the administrators would just practice what they preach. This “ if it isn't broke then it doesn't need to be fixed,” mentality needs to stop. Dean, Kevin Dunn of Tufts University, Academic Affairs liaison stated, “ Since the policy came into fruition, there have been no changes. Because there have been very few instances where the policy has been openly broken, the administration does not see this as one of its top priorities, according to Dunn.

(Lifschultz, 2003, p. 1). The policy is not supported by all, however. Some students believe that the University's policy is unnecessary and intrusive. “ It's not a priority only because it's not coming up,” Dunn said. (Lifschultz, 2003, p.

1). Conclusion After sound research and perusing the paper, the group has clearly come up with the answers to the first two questions from the introduction. What are the primary and secondary ethical issues of concern to corporate leaders? And how are universities addressing these issues? In

the first question, the following issues were answered. Productivity was dependent on the commitment of the relationship, sexual harassment lawsuits were more probable, reputations can be stained, internal effects bring about a web of undesired results, and corporate scandals showed just how common this ethical issue is. The second question addressed was how universities are handling these ethical issues.

The first approach, an assertive approach, showed that certain universities are doing exceptionally well in this area by providing the intercollegiate ethics bowl, enforcing strict policies, and offering a variety of courses in ethics. The second approach, a passive approach, showed that certain universities have a laid back policy with no follow through, procrastination, and complacency-avoidance. REFERENCES Anderson, Carolyn I. , Hunsaker, Phillip L..

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