HR TIP OF THE WEEK

GENOVA BURNS LLC
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

TOPIC: Is A No-Romance In The Workplace Policy Enough To Protect Your Business From Litigation and Reputational Damage?

LEGAL DEVELOPMENT: Nvidia takes the spotlight this week for its CEO's affair and launch of a company investigation. Just a few months earlier, the kiss-cam at a Coldplay concert took down another CEO and an HR leader for their office romance. McDonald's terminated its CEO for engaging in a relationship with an employee. The list is a lot longer than these three companies. Even if your company isn't on the same scale as Nvidia, you are not immune from office romances, and by extension, inappropriate customer/vendor relationships, that can disrupt your workplace and productivity, cause reputational damage, and expose your business to harassment claims. Is a no-romance in the workplace policy the answer to this problem?

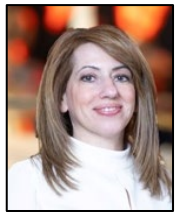
HR TIP: No-romance policies take various forms. Some companies prohibit all romantic relationships between co-workers. Other policies only prohibit relationships between supervisors and subordinates, or between anyone who has control over another's terms of employment, discipline, and compensation. Each of these policies has different consequences to legal exposure and company culture. Whatever policy fits your company's needs, it's not enough. Consider adding these policies or agreements to complement your rules on romance in the workplace:

* Code of Company Ethics/Conflict of Interest
* Family Members/Close Relationships In the Workplace
* Anti-Harassment/Discrimination/Retaliation
* Confidentiality
* Professionalism
* Consensual Relationship Agreement

Add training and monitoring to the mix. This means that your company should hold trainings to explain the requirements (to both employees and leaders), and re-issue the policies/agreements annually to ensure compliance. As we can see, the consequences for companies that don't get it right are significant, and unfortunately, can dominate the business and its reputation.

ABOUT ME

I partner with HR and legal on complex workplace issues. I've spent my career counseling employers on employment, HR, and compliance issues. I'm a Partner at Genova Burns and Chair of the Human Resources, Law and Compliance Practice Group.



Brigette N. Eagan, Esq. 973.535.7114 beagan@genovaburns.com

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