
Employee Fraternization Policy

Policy brief & purpose

Our Fraternization policy outlines our guidelines on employees forming personal relationships with each other.

We don't want to place undue restrictions on employees dating colleagues, as we acknowledge that freedom of choosing one's partner is an individual's right. But, without rules and guidelines, romantic relationships between colleagues may negatively impact our workplace. This policy will set restrictions to maintain workplace conduct and order.

Friendships forming between employees are also included in this policy. Friendships allow for a more collaborative environment, but they might also occasionally create cliques and fragmentation inside departments.

This policy does not restrict participating in labor unions or other labor or civil rights organizations.

Scope

This policy applies to all our employees regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

For the purposes of this policy, "dating" includes consensual romantic relationships and sexual relations. Non-consensual relationships constitute sexual harassment and we prohibit them explicitly.

Policy elements

Dating in the workplace

Dating colleagues may cause problems if not handled correctly. Examples of common concerns are:

- Colleagues who date might spend a large portion of their work time talking or meeting with each other instead of completing their duties.
- Fights or breakups between couples might affect their ability to collaborate or maintain peace in the workplace.
- Employees who dated supervisors might sue for sexual harassment if they are terminated.

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- Employees who date executives might unfairly benefit from favoritism.

So, we advise our employees to:

- Consider any possible conflict of interest before they enter into a relationship with a coworker.
- Inform HR when they enter into a romantic or intimate relationship with a colleague.
- Keep discussions of personal issues out of the workplace.
- Seek counseling from HR or specialized employees (e.g. psychologist) if needed.
- Maintain professionalism despite the status of the relationship and seek advice from their managers or HR to solve any issues.

When serious problems arise between couples, they can arrange a meeting with HR or their manager to find a solution. Example of a possible solution is to consult with and transfer an employee to a different division, without loss of benefits or compensation.

Unacceptable and acceptable behavior

When two employees are in a relationship with one another, they should behave appropriately in the workplace. We define unacceptable behavior as any action that:

- Offends our people.
- Disrupts or hinders our operations.
- Distracts our employees from their duties.
- Decreases our employees' individual performance.

Examples of acceptable behavior for employees are:

- Passing by their partner's office to talk to them for non-work reasons for a short time.
- Displaying affection discreetly and infrequently while on company premises.
- Discussing their plans as a couple during breaks or lunch hours (with or without colleagues.)
- Coming to and leaving from work together.

Examples of unacceptable behavior for employees are:

- Arguing in the workplace during or after working hours.
- Kissing or touching inappropriately in front of colleagues.
- Exchanging an excessive number of instant messages or calls unrelated to their work during working hours.
- Making their colleagues uncomfortable by talking or boasting about the relationship during working hours.

Employees who exhibit unacceptable behavior will face progressive discipline, up to and

including termination in cases of repeated violations. HR is responsible for determining appropriate penalties.

Employees are also obliged to behave appropriately towards their colleagues who date each other. We prohibit victimization and hostility towards employees for any reason. This includes sexual jokes, gossip and improper comments. Employees who witness this kind of behavior should report it to HR.

Employees are obliged to follow our Code of Conduct at all times.

Dating managers

To avoid accusations of favoritism, abuse of authority and sexual harassment, we prohibit supervisors from dating employees who report to them. This restriction may extend to every manager within two levels above an employee, regardless of team or department to facilitate moving or promoting employees.

Supervisors are strictly forbidden from dating their direct reports. If this occurs, the supervisor may face disciplinary action up to and including termination. This rule may be less strict in cases when managers enter into a consenting relationship with an employee from another team or department. When this happens, they must inform HR as soon as possible. It's to their best interest not to conceal their relationship as they may provoke disciplinary action if and when they are discovered. HR will evaluate the situation and act accordingly (e.g. transfer an employee or prepare a "love contract" to ensure the relationship is consensual.)

Employees will not face demotion, victimization or loss of benefits if we have to transfer them to another team or department. The supervisor may be reprimanded depending on the circumstances. We may terminate those who repeatedly disregard this restriction.

Couples who are married or in a domestic partnership

Employees who enter in an official relationship with another employee after they're both hired by our company should follow the rules outlined above.

A married employee (or an employee who has a domestic partner) who serves as hiring manager for their team is not allowed to consider hiring their partner for open roles. This might bring about questions of favoritism in the hiring process. They are allowed to refer their partner for employment to other teams or departments for which they don't have any managerial or hiring authority.

If we discover that a hiring manager hired their partner, HR may move one of them to another team or branch where one won't supervise the other. The hiring manager will receive a reprimand, as their hiring decision may have compromised our company's commitment to equal opportunity and avoiding favoritism.

Friendships in the workplace

Employees who work together may naturally form friendships either in or out of their workplace. We encourage this relationship between peers, as it can help employees communicate, collaborate and preserve harmony while working.

However, we must consider the negative consequences of forming this kind of personal relationship. Employees who are friends might occasionally:

- Enter into disputes over borrowed money.
- Gossip about colleagues and acquaintances.
- Form cliques that exclude certain colleagues and bring discord.
- Prevent one another (whether directly or indirectly) from accepting promotions or relocations for the sake of their friendship.

To mitigate possible issues, we advise our employees to:

- Discuss non-work related issues outside of the workplace.
- Ask for their managers or HR's help when they are unable to resolve an issue or conflict of interest.
- Follow our Code of Conduct and act professionally at all times.
- Focus on their work instead of their friendships while at the office.

Friendships with supervisors

Being friends with one's manager may have both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, friendship might facilitate honesty, trust and job satisfaction for both parties. But, friendship might also make managers and employees confused about how they should treat each other. Questions of favoritism might arise too, and result in negative feelings and loss of morale.

For these reasons, we discourage employees being friends with their managers. We do encourage a harmonious and open relationship, but we think it's to everyone's best interest if managers are not involved with their direct reports outside of the workplace.

Openness

The key point of this policy is openness. We can't stop employees from forming relationships with one another and trying to prohibit them from doing so could incite deceit, resentment and gossip.

For this reason, we expect our employees to be open about their personal relationships with colleagues. This does not mean that employees should draw attention to their relationship. But, keeping work relationships secret may negatively impact all parties involved.

HR will be at our employees' disposal to explain our policy, attitude and course of action in cases of violation.

Our company's commitment

Just like we expect employees to comply with this policy, our company has responsibilities that we are obliged to follow. We will:

- Enforce this policy to HR and senior management as well as employees.
- Treat everyone equally when taking disciplinary action without discriminating against protected characteristics.
- Prohibit victimization, violence and retaliation of any kind.
- Examine each situation separately and consider all aspects and perspectives before making decisions.

Our employees should follow our anti-discrimination policy at all times. For example, HR must not penalize a homosexual couple differently than a heterosexual couple when they both have violated the present policy in the same manner. Likewise, if a team member is discovered to have a relationship with their manager, the person who will be transferred or terminated must not be chosen based on their gender.

We will keep our employees' freedom and individual rights in mind and follow the law.