

by the numbers

Training daze

A recent survey conducted by Hudson shows that not all employee-training sessions are worth the time and effort. One in three employees claimed that their most recent training session was not worth their time, and 12 percent said it was a total waste of time. More than half of the U.S. workforce has attended company-led training programs in the last year. The survey adds that younger workers and those making less than \$20,000 annually are among those most likely to participate in future training sessions.

job advice

Get noticed

Standing out at work can be a challenge, but William Arruda, president of Reach Personal Branding in New York, says the rewards you can reap make it worthwhile. "One client took it upon herself to make the whole office healthy," he says. "She worked with the cafeteria to create healthy meals, she started on-site aerobics classes and ended all her e-mails with a health tip. This made her known throughout the company."

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interview tip

Master plan

Being an active interviewee means coming to the interview with a plan of action. Mike Schwager, president of Worldlink Media Consultants based in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., says to come up with three or four communications objectives to introduce during your interview. "Don't wait for the perfect question to be given," he says. "Conduct practice interview sessions where you are asked a question, respond to it, but then introduce the copy point before you conclude your answer."

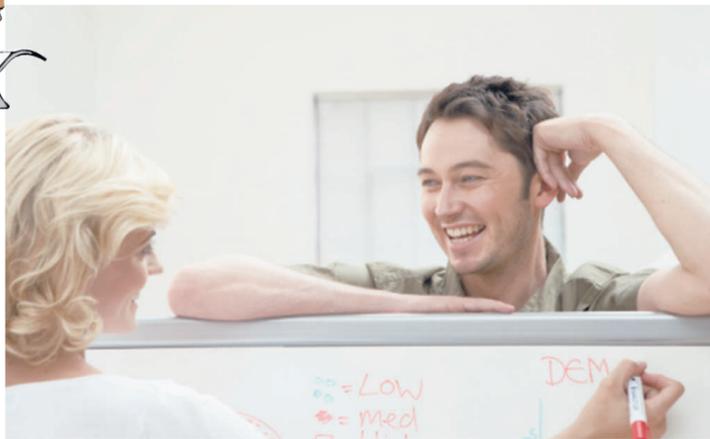
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Cubicle couples

Office relationships shouldn't be avenue for career advancement



When an office romance starts up, everything is great — but, just like in an outside-of-work dating life, problems can arise. And when work is involved, that may result in unwanted complications.

The concept of workplace relationships is somewhat inevitable, particularly today when workers often spend a large portion of their time at the office. In a recent study conducted by Engage.com, 6 percent of the 1,000 couples surveyed said they first met their spouse while working together. What's more, an additional 6 percent said a co-worker is most likely to fix him or her up on a date, second only to a friend.

While the temptation might be there, it's important to remember that office romances will never be a viable option for getting ahead in your career. So before you ask out that cute guy or girl from accounts payable, be sure to weigh the pros and cons thoughtfully.

Ethics count

"Hard work, not workplace romance, should be the primary tool to get ahead in your career," explains Jeff Cohen, a dating and relationship expert for About.com. "Sleeping your way to the top is a Hollywood cliché, not a viable option for advancing your job prospects."

Cohen adds that, while flirting with a co-worker or supervisor is practically commonplace on TV and in the movies, it is hardly an accurate depiction of real life.

"Flirting is more subjective than sex," he continues. "What one person calls flirty, another might describe as friendly. There's nothing wrong with being outgoing, friendly and likeable. These traits will typically help your career. When it crosses over into unwanted sexual advances, that's when it clearly crosses the line."

Legal woes

Beyond the relationship complications, however, there are also possible legal ramifications, not to mention potentially career-threatening consequences. Ruth Houston, author of "Is He Cheating on You? 829 Telltale Signs" (Lifestyle Publications, \$29.95) says that while 56 percent of employees claim to have dated a co-worker, doing so can elicit some unwanted circumstances.

"You force co-workers and colleagues to take sides, no matter how neutral they try to be, and they will form negative opinions about your judgment," she says. "If the relationship ends badly, your best bet is to move on. If you remain in that department or with that company, productivity will suffer — yours as well as that of your co-workers."

Group gossip

Houston adds that even though both parties involved might agree to keep the relationship under wraps, never underestimate the power of the grapevine if you decide to proceed with the interoffice romance.

"Keep it low key, don't flaunt the fact that the two of you are romantically involved," Houston says. "Avoid public displays of affection —

Involved in an office romance? Be honest, ethical

While many people have found their spouse or potential soul mate at work, it's important to keep a few things in mind before going ahead with a relationship. Keith Ferrazzi, a relationship expert and author of "Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time" (Currency, \$24.95), has these tips for co-workers who have been hit by Cupid's arrow.

1. Come clean. "It's all about integrity and honesty," says Ferrazzi. "You never want to do anything that might come back to bite you. If people see you sneaking around, it will cast doubt about your integrity in general."

2. Separate love life from work life.

"Relationships in the office can, at times, be good because you're able to share the work experience with the person you love," says Ferrazzi. "However, you've got to make sure you know how to separate the two. You need make sure work and work-talk doesn't constitute 100 percent of the relationship."

3. Is it legal? Many companies have office romance policies in place. It's important to know what these are before getting involved.

"It's almost always inappropriate to start dating a subordinate/boss after you or they already work there," Ferrazzi explains. "The status of employment and the relationship become far too hard to separate. Be sure to date an equal or someone from a different department or division. If you date someone under you, it's extremely important for that employee to know that the relationship has nothing to do with their employment."



it's highly unprofessional. Do not exchange embarrassing or ostentatious flowers, cards or gifts."

Though small, discrete and tasteful gifts are OK, she says, gossiping or allowing your relationship to interfere with your work in any way is highly frowned upon.

Dating the boss

Starting a relationship with a manager or direct supervisor may have more complexities than it's worth, suggests April Masini, author of "Think & Date Like a Man: Be the Woman Who Gets the Man She Wants... and Keeps Him!" (iUniverse Inc., \$15.95).

"Dating your boss may be a lightning rod of trouble, but the truth is it's natural to fall in love with someone you work with that you admire," she explains. "And if you're a terrific asset to the company, you're going to catch your boss's attention with your work. If you're attractive, and there's chemistry between the two of you, it's natural for a relationship to become possible. Dating the boss is taboo only if you let it be."

If you do decide to have a romantic relationship with your superior, keeping the relationship professional while you are at work is vital to both your personal life and career life. Open communication is key, says Masini. If the two of you are serious about

making the relationship work, it's important to acknowledge the fact that others may perceive your love interest in a different way, so don't let who you're dating cloud your professional judgment.

"Your boss may look like Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie, and you may be so pumped up that you've got a hot date, but keep your feelings to yourself and your friends outside of work," she adds. "This is a great time to start practicing certain boundaries. Work gossip is inevitable — practice good behavior by keeping the water cooler talk to work and the weather."

Watchful eye

Though workplace romances are bound to happen at one time or another, be sure both people involved have considered and discussed the potential problems that could arise. Jealousy, hurt feelings and rumors are all warning signs of potential disaster, so it's important to remain compassionate toward other workers' feelings and the effect the relationship will have on your career.

"If you're both single and available, go for it," says Masini. "But be impeccable with your behavior and your work. You're going to be under more scrutiny in this relationship than you would be if you were dating someone you didn't work with."



Heard, not seen

Phone interviews require tact, preparation

Participating in an interview over the phone is an entirely different beast than a face-to-face encounter; what you say and how you say it become even more important. With that in mind, here are some quick tips for mastering the phone interview:

Pay attention

First things first — shut down your computer and turn off your cell phone. You shouldn't have any distractions.

"Pay complete, total and full attention to the person on the other end of the line as if you were staring them in the eye," says Karen Friedman, a communications coach in Blue Bell, Pa. "People can read and feel your body language across the miles, so, act as if they were in the room with you so they can feel your energy, presence and attention."

April Callis, author of "Springboard to Success" (Springboard, \$19.95) claims that standing up while you participate in the interview will help you stay focused.

"It will give you more energy in your voice if you stand," says Callis. "Also, smile while you talk so that you sound friendly and enthused."

Be clear

Since you're on the phone, you'll need to speak as clearly as possible.

"Pronounce your words clearly and don't trail off at the end of a sentence," says Friedman. "You want to make sure you are heard and understood. Additionally, pause to give the person on the other end of the line a chance to digest what you are saying and to participate in the conversation."

Be prepared

Since the telephone interview is most commonly a screening, you'll need to go the extra mile to connect with the interviewer. In order to do this, be sure to decide in advance which questions you might ask when prompted by your interviewer.

"Think about what you want the other person to know so you don't spend the entire interview simply answering questions," says Friedman. "By only answering questions, you miss opportunities to deliver key points if the other person on the other end of the phone doesn't ask you a question to trigger one of these points."

You should also prepare by having examples to highlight your strengths.

"Be warm and personal by backing it up with examples, stories and anecdotes that the person on the other end of the phone can relate to and understand," says Friedman.

Callis adds that you should be sure to tell them you are looking forward to meeting them.

"They are trying to screen you out so don't give them a reason to put you in the 'no' pile," she says. "Stay upbeat, positive and attentive."