

Love Contracts: A Way to Manage Workplace Romance

New Providence, NJ (Feb. 5, 2015) -- Claims of discrimination, unfair treatment and sexual harassment are among the issues employers may face if they don't have a "love contract", or a policy for managing romantic relationships at work, says [XpertHR](#), the leading online compliance resource. 43% of HR professionals report romances in their workplaces, according to SHRM.

"Office romances are often inevitable and they can cause complications for employers, who need to ensure proper workplace conduct and make sure all employees are treated fairly," says Beth Zoller, Legal Editor, XpertHR. "Employers should evaluate the risks related to romantic relationships in the workplace, adopt proper policies to protect the employer's interests, and set parameters for dating and close personal relationships at work."

A [love contract](#) is a document signed by employees involved in a romantic relationship setting parameters for their relationship in the workplace. By signing the love contract, the employees agree that the romantic relationship is voluntary and consensual, they will refrain from retaliation, and they will not sue the employer for sexual harassment. A love contract may also outline the employer's expectations of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate workplace conduct.

Love contracts generally address a grievance process and eliminate the possibility of a sexual harassment suit when the relationship ends.

[XpertHR](#) recommends the following for employers who want to maintain a fair and professional workplace:

Consider the Risks of Employee Relationships—Conduct that was welcome during the course of the relationship may be considered unwelcome when the relationship ends, resulting in a sexual harassment claim.

Understand the Dangers of Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships—Other employees may claim unfair treatment if the supervisor inappropriately favored the employee he or she was romantically involved with, or a rejected lover may claim that the supervisor retaliated against him or her with a poor performance review and undesirable work assignments after the relationship ended.

Implement Policies That Will Protect the Employer's Interests—In addition to implementing strict policies against discrimination, harassment and retaliation, an employer should consider implementing other policies such as a workplace dating policy or love contract that will protect the employer's interests. A love contract outlines the employer's expectations of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate conduct for the workplace.

Provide Training to All Employees and Supervisors—Training should address what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behavior for the workplace as well as guidelines regarding behavior that is considered discriminatory, harassing and/or retaliatory.

Create a Complaint Procedure and Respond to Complaints—Such a system will provide employees with more than one individual to bring a complaint to and ensure that the employee feels comfortable notifying the employer of his or her concerns regarding unfair treatment or improper conduct.

Manage Workplace Relationships—The employer may want to consider transferring either the supervisor or subordinate so as to avoid a direct reporting relationship and a potential conflict of interest.

For more information on workplace romance policies and love contracts, visit [XpertHR](#).

About XpertHR

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