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13 Dec 2012

Mistletoe madness

By Donna Obstfeld

With the office Christmas party season in full swing, there is always a chance of finding romance at work. Often, it's these circumstances that encourage two people to find each other, pluck up the courage to flirt or even finally declare their feelings.

But wherever it is you meet, office romances need to be handled with extreme sensitivity and caution. Many larger companies have policies on workplace relationships. Examples may include that you can't work in the same team, one of you can't report to the other or you can't report to the same senior manager. One of you may well be moved to another suitable job in a different team or area.



But while this is all very well in medium or large companies, it is not usually possible to separate people in a small business such as a family pharmacy. Remember that if you're working for a small-business owner, they do need to protect their business and put it first.

Ideally, they will have a policy on workplace relationships, and then you should declare your relationship in the first instance. Once your relationship is out in the open, you should take positive steps to work with the business owner to ensure that any impact on day-to-day operations is minimised.

One risk to the business, which could cause significant problems is if your relationship fails. Can you continue to work together without affecting the pharmacy or colleagues? If there are problems with performance or attitude as a result of a relationship breaking down – whether it started at work or not – then be aware that a contractor has the right to performance-manage or discipline employees in line with normal company policy and procedures.

Donna Obstfeld runs DOHR, an human resources practice based in Hertfordshire that provides companies with tailor-made HR solutions. She is contactable on 01923 504100 or enquiries@dohr.co.uk.

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As a locum, do you feel comfortable about voicing your concerns in the workplace?

- Yes, most employers fully welcome my feedback
- Sometimes, although there is always a worry that they won't invite me back
- No, even raising a matter of patient safety could lead to a loss of bookings

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