

MEMORANDUM

To: David Wallace
CC: Jan Levinson, Michael Scott
From: Toby Flenderson, HR Representative
Date: September 30, 2020
Subject: Romance at Work

Romance is a strong emotion. When things are going good, look out! There isn't much that would step between two people in a hot romance. An earthquake could shake the ground, and as long as they were in each other's arms they wouldn't even notice. But if things turn bad and one of the two feels hurt or rejected, this can cause an earthquake! The emotion can be 100% strong in either direction.

Unfortunately, if this personal life is mixed with business life, the outcome is twice as bad.

I have some suggestions that I believe will help with your problem of interoffice dating. It is very important that we protect the employer as well as the employees and make this a comfortable place to work for all parties involved.

We should allow interoffice dating but we do need to set some rules. Reading the article by Timothy Bland, "Romance in the Workplace: Good Thing or Bad?" gave me some ideas. His article had a lot of good information on how to protect an employer. First, we should not allow supervisors to date their subordinates as this will cause favoritism, and will increase the chances of a sexual harassment law suit. In case that this does happen we should immediately remove the employee from the supervision of that manager. Second, public affection should not be displayed in the workplace. What happens in the private life should be left there. Let's encourage communication and make a comfortable environment for everyone. People should not be afraid to let management know if a relationship is present. Lastly, training is the best way to avoid any serious problems. If we provide advance training for all the employees about potential problems with office romance, it might be enough to discourage some people from going down that path in the first place.

If we take all the right steps we should be able to avoid any potential legal liability, and the employees' privacy rights would also be protected.

Have a great day!

Toby Flenderson

Commented [JM1]: subject line might be misleading (might suggest memo is reporting a relationship at work/between employees)

Commented [JM2]: since this is a positive/neutral/informational message, it should have a direct (or more direct) opening.

Commented [JM3]: Your PAGOS plan suggested your purpose was more than just protecting the employer.

Commented [JM4]: not needed

Commented [JM5]: is this part of your second recommendation? What do public displays of affection and open communication have to do with each other? These should be separate items.

Also, not sure if "open communication" is the same as letting management know about a relationship.

Commented [JM6]: training in what specifically? in notifying management of relationships? in anti discrimination? in sexual harassment? (maybe you need a broad name/category for all of this stuff)

Commented [JM7]: cliché/idiom

Commented [JM8]: memos don't have a signature block since the info is already in the memo heading at the top.

Highlights: reader-centered writing ▪ conciseness ▪ clarity ▪ weak verbs

Purpose (& Organization? & Conciseness?)

Your PAGOS plan says that your purpose has two parts: 1) to explain why DM needs a policy (and training) and 2) suggest some broad parts (or ideas) that should go into the policy. I think the purpose is in there, but it gets lost because of the indirect opening, organization, and wordiness issues.

First, I think you can edit out the whole first paragraph (the indirect opening). Because this is a neutral message, you can use a direct opening. So, you can start with a version of what's in your second paragraph. I'd be clearer and more direct about it, too. Maybe something like, "To ensure Dunder Mifflin employees continue to have a safe, comfortable, fair work environment, we need a clear written policy and training."

Then, better organization will help you bring everything in your text back to that purpose. You could have a heading to indicate "Policy Recommendations," and then another heading with "Training Recommendations." For the policy recommendations, it looks like you have a list of recommendations—if so, it might make the text easier to understand if you put them in a list (or in points).

Audience

You've done a great job writing to David Wallace—you've included his values in his language (wanting to protect DM, wanting a positive environment for employees, etc)

But because your audience also includes Jan and Michael (almost equally as David), I'd try to rephrase a lot of the negative language to positive (if and where possible). Jan and Michael might feel they're being condescended to in the first paragraph (and I think you should edit it out for other reasons anyway). Also, the negative phrasing might feel unnecessarily critical. I mention reader-centered language (and negative language) below. Revising that stuff will make your text a lot more effective for the Jan and Michael part of the audience.

Reader-Centered Writing

I marked a lot of places where you can shift your language from "avoiding the negative thing" to "ensuring the positive thing."

For example, in the last three sentences of the correspondence (lines 21-27), there are four instances of negative language—1) "avoid any serious problems," 2) "potential problems", 3) "discourage...", and 4) "avoid any potential legal liability." In these cases, you can **remove (or lessen) the negativity by increasing positive emphasis** and putting the **focus on the reader benefit** (instead of the potentially negative outcome).

For example (lines 21-22), instead of:

Lastly, training is the best way to **avoid any serious problems**.

You might revise to something like

Lastly, training employees in [whatever the thing is called] will ensure a fair, productive working environment [or whatever term/phrase there is for an office environment free of sexual harassment, discrimination, and PDA].

Weak Verbs

I marked a few of them, but you should also **take a look at a couple of places where "should be" or "should not be"** is a weak verb and/or passive voice. Most of them are highlighted for other reasons, so I didn't double highlight. For the sake of an example (line 19):

Original text:

Second, public affection **should not be** displayed in the workplace.

If you shift the negative "should not be displayed" to positive phrasing, you can make the sentence active and replace "be" with a better verb. A possible revision:

Second, while in the workplace, employees should treat others as professional colleagues, even in cases where a personal relationship is present outside of the workplace.

Conciseness

A lot of these are instances where you can just edit out the extra words. For example (lines 10-12):

Original sentence:

It is very important that we protect the employer as well as the employees and make this a comfortable place to work for all parties involved.

Possible Revised Sentence:

Protecting the employer and employees ensure a comfortable workplace.