

DR. LOIS FRANKEL

Get and keep the job you want.

Before getting into this month's coaching tips, I'd like to invite you to join me for a sneak preview of my next book, **Leadership is a Woman's Art**, at a presentation I'll be making at the Women's City Club of Pasadena on Thursday, February 9th. The presentation, which starts at 7:30 p.m., is free to clients and friends of Corporate Coaching International. Dinner and drinks will be available for purchase beginning at 6:00 p.m. The first ten people to register will receive a free CCI 20th Anniversary travel alarm clock. Space is limited, so contact Jessica@corporatecoachingintl.com to register or for more information. I hope to see you there.

Now – I'd like to talk about sex in the workplace. Sexual harassment, that is. It's an issue that affects everyone. Take this quick quiz to test your knowledge about the subject by answering true or false to each statement:

1. Asking a co-worker out on a date could lead to a charge of sexual harassment.
2. If the UPS driver tells jokes of a sexual nature to your receptionist you could be liable if she files a claim of sexual harassment.
3. If your boss is dating a co-worker you could file and win a claim of sexual harassment.
4. If several employees are passing around a copy of Playboy in the company lunch room the company could lose a claim of sexual harassment.
5. Two employees who had been dating broke up. One of the couple has been going to the other person's home on a daily basis begging to get back together. Even though this is all happening outside the workplace, the company could still be held liable.

The answer is yes in all five circumstances. The language in the federal EEOC guidelines covers a wide variety of behaviors, including those listed above and employees, employers, and managers can all be held liable – whether they “know of or should have known of” the harassment. There are two kinds of sexual harassment – *quid pro quo harassment* is when employment promises are made in exchange for sexual favors. *Environmental harassment* exists when particular behaviors create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Let me give you some tips for how to protect yourself and your company from unwarranted claims of sexual harassment:

- When it comes to workplace dating, use the “one bite of the apple” common sense rule. One request for a date is usually not considered sexual harassment – but beyond that you're on dangerous territory. No means no.
- Off-color jokes can be viewed as condoning an offensive work environment – whether you're a manager or employee. Your best bet is to just not tell them and to discourage others from doing so as well.
- Ask yourself if you would want your behavior written about in the L.A. Times or done to your partner or spouse. If you answer no then you shouldn't engage in the behavior to begin with.

- Be certain that your company has a written zero tolerance policy for harassment of any kind. Distribute it and train your managers how to respond to internal complaints of sexual harassment. Additionally, develop a specific procedure by which someone can file an internal complaint.
- Take all complaints of harassment seriously. You must show that you took *immediate and appropriate corrective action* to have a chance of winning a sexual harassment charge.
- Circulate these tips to your employees and, while you're at it, let them know you will not tolerate harassment and want to be immediately informed if someone feels it is taking place in your company or department.

Until next month, stay well.

Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.