

From the Boardroom to the Bedroom

Should you date your subordinate?

BY SCOTT SIMONE



Inter-office relationships can be tricky waters for anyone to navigate, but especially complicated if you happen to be the boss. So what do you do if you find yourself smitten with an employee?

Check your company's policy; some will explicitly prohibit office dating, says Melissa Leonard, an etiquette and protocol consultant with EstablishYourselfNY.com in Mamaroneck. "For the most part, companies in New York State have free reign to restrict employee behavior," says Mitchell Weingarden, an employment and labor lawyer in White Plains.

Also, should you start a relationship, remember, not all relationships end well. "This may be awkward, and some bitter

feelings may make your work life miserable," warns Leonard. Worse still, you could find yourself vulnerable to accusations of sexual harassment.

Still, if you engage in office dating, discretion is key. "It doesn't have to be a secret, but do keep a low profile in the beginning, as it may not turn into a long-term relationship," Leonard says. But all agree that it's unrealistic to expect the romance to remain a complete secret. "It is better to openly acknowledge it, act in a professional manner, and try not to 'flaunt' it," says R. Bonnie Haber, president of Corporate Color, LLC, an executive coaching firm in Croton-on-Hudson.