

Smith? Payroll Here...do you have a Q.Pidd working there?

Nearly half of office employees polled found romance on the job

By Roger Fillion
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With Valentine's Day upon us, it's clear Cupid has been busy at the office.

A joint survey bet the Mountain States Employers Council and the *Rocky Mountain News* found that 48 percent of respondents reported they had been involved in an office romance. Fifty-two percent had not.

Most office affairs involved co-workers. The online survey of 122 people indicated that 35 percent of respondents had experienced an affair with a co-worker.

While the survey on the employers council's Web site was anonymous, the respondents are believed to be managers from local and regional companies.

The results mesh with national data.

"Work is a natural catalyst for this to occur," said Ken Pinnock, director of human-resource services at the employers council, a Denver business group.

Pinnock noted people in the workplace spend more waking hours with one another than with their families or others. And he said colleagues share things in common.

"You add a little chemical spark, and people can be vulnerable to having a romantic relationship," he said.

That doesn't mean employers are happy about office romances.

"Employers get concerned about issues of sexual harassment, claims of favoritism and conflicts of interest," Pinnock said.

Romances involving a superior and a subordinate tend to set off the most alarms. The fear, according to Pinnock, is that if the relationship sours, the subordinate will claim sexual harassment.

The survey indicated that 11 percent of respondents had an affair with a superior, while 2 percent said they had been involved with a subordinate.

Have you ever been in an office romance?

- **No:** 52 percent
- **Yes:** 48 percent

Those saying yes include:

- 35 percent with a co-worker
- 11 percent with a superior
- 2 percent with a subordinate

Source: Mountain States Employers Council – *Rocky Mountain News* joint survey

Why don't those numbers match?

"People may not want to be forthcoming on that one," Pinnock said.

Two separate surveys suggest that most employers don't forbid co-worker dating. According to the data, more than 70 percent of employers don't have written policies against office dating because they see "no pressing need" and, among those who do, just 9 percent ban office dating outright.

Why are bans less likely?

You can't regulate the heart with a handbook," Pinnock said.

The e-mail survey of 493 employers was taken by the Society of Human Resource Managers in conjunction with an online worker survey by CareerJournal.com, *The Wall Street Journal* workplace Web site.

Their poll also indicated that 40 percent of employees had an office romance sometime in their work lives.

And according to an Opinion Research Corp. poll of 4,000 singles for America Online, 54 percent of men and 40 percent of women are open to dating a co-worker. But 70 percent of men and 83 percent of women call dating the boss a no-no.