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My Paper



Busy S'poreans finding love at the office

by Adrain Lim

They set rules for themselves: Maintain professionalism at all times; no holding hands; no kissing or doing anything mushy in the office.

That was what colleagues Joshua and Megan (not their real names) decided on when they started dating in early 2009.

The executives, who worked in the same department at an IT firm, also had to endure the occasional teasing from other colleagues. Still, their romance blossomed and the couple got married a year later.

"Our management staff saw how we handled ourselves and were, in fact, happy for us. We even invited them to our wedding," Megan told My Paper.

Their office romance is not uncommon among Singaporeans, who are becoming more open to finding love at the workplace, judging from the results of a recent survey on office romance.

Eight in 10 of the office workers surveyed agreed that it was easier to find a partner within the workplace, and felt that office romances should be allowed between single co-workers.

Close to one in three admitted to dating a co-worker at least once in their career.

The notion that office romances will fizzle out in a short period was disproved, with 57 per cent claiming that they dated their co-worker for at least one year while working at the same company. About 27 per cent of those surveyed ended up marrying their co-worker.

The survey was conducted last month by online job portal JobStreet.com, and involved 315 Singaporean employees and 100 employers.

Mr Josh Goh, assistant director of corporate services at human-resource consultancy The GMP Group, said executives today are "time-strapped" and have difficulty finding time to socialise outside of work. Hence, the office becomes one of the places to find a life partner.

Ms Michelle Goh, owner of dating agency Complete Me, which is accredited by the Social Development Network, said that office romances are "healthy, to some extent", as they make the workplace more enjoyable. However, she said couples have to know where to draw the line and not let it affect their work.

Both experts said that tricky situations can occur, such as when a supervisor is dating a subordinate. In such situations, the couple have to be careful not to share confidential company information or give each other preferential treatment, Mr Goh added.

Among the survey respondents who said they have engaged in an office romance at least once, 16 per cent said they dated a direct subordinate, while 11 per cent said they dated a direct supervisor.

The survey also found that 69 per cent of employers gave the thumbs up to relationships between single co-workers, but on the condition that there was no direct conflict of work interests.

Ms Goh also advised singles to get out and meet more people.

"Just spare three hours each week to attend a dating event, for instance, and you can enlarge your social circle," she quipped.

adrianl@sph.com.sg

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