

# TALKING THE WALK

CONVERSATIONS FOR ETHICS & COMPLIANCE TEAMS

## Case Scenario

### Case 12

## WILL THEY? WON'T THEY? SHOULD THEY? SHOULDN'T THEY?

“Are you coming to The Exchange, Leti? You have to! It’s never as much fun without you.”

Leti turns around to see who’s talking, even though she already knows it’s Jaxson. As she was hoping and fearing, he’s smiling The Smile at her. The smile where his eyes crinkle at the corners and the room lights up so clearly that Leti could swear the sun just broke through the clouds.

“You know you want to,” he encourages.

Kayla joins in the crusade: “I hear they’re having \$2 tequila shots. Exactly what you need.”

She winks at Leti. Ever since Jaxson joined their team, Kayla’s been teasing Leti that they are just a bottle of tequila away from wedded bliss.

“Maybe. I have a few things to finish up. Then I may head over,” Leti concludes.

“I hope I get to see you there,” Jaxson finishes, then smiles at her again before leaving. *Does he have a filter on or something? Who gets to be that adorable all the time? I swear, an angel gets its wings every time he smiles.*

“You haaave to go,” Kayla prods. “Travis is the love of my life, but he definitely doesn’t look at me the way Jaxson looks at you. Like flowers bloom when you walk by and little birds help you get dressed in the morning. Actually, it’s more ‘Just found out that the war is over and I’m not shipping off so I can stay and make a life with you. Let’s get started right this moment!’”

“It’s not that obvious,” Leti blushes.

### THE CHARACTERS

Leti: a hard-working employee in her early 20s; enjoys her team, but hoping to get into the company’s management training program.

Jaxson: a more recent addition to the team; gets along with all his coworkers, but has a special connection with Leti.

Kayla: works on the same project team as Jaxson and Leti; is Leti’s best work friend.

### **Case 12 continued**

“Yes, it is. It’s all the rest of us can talk about. We have a pool going. If y’all figure it out by the end of this week, I win. Most everyone is already out—they’d banked on it happening weeks ago. Except Mateo—such a cynic!! He’s sure you care more about the management training program than finally getting together with your soul mate. You don’t, do you?”

*Ugh, did she have to remind me about the management training program?! Leti thinks to herself. The decision emails were supposed to go out today, and I’ve been trying not to stress about it. I’ve been working so hard for it.*

“Earth to Leti. Where did you go?” Kayla asks, snapping her fingers to pull her friend back to reality. “We’re all leaving now. I better see you over there. You know that you and Jaxson are perfect for each other. And I could use the 200 bucks.”

After Kayla leaves, Leti is able to finish the last of her to-do’s for the day. It’s harder for her to focus than normal. She’s distracted by the email from corporate that should have come by now, by Kayla’s teasing, and, more than anything, by Jaxson’s smile. *This is already getting in the way of work. I should probably just go there. What’s the worst that can happen? Oh yeah, I get rejected and still have to work with him. Or we get together and get in trouble for dating. What is corporate’s policy on that?!... Even if it is OK for us to date, what if it’s a disaster and we have to work together and it’s super awkward? Or...* Leti can feel herself spiraling. She takes three deep breaths to clear her thoughts, decides whether she’s heading for home or happy hour, and then walks out the door.

# TALKING THE WALK

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### Questions for Discussion

#### TALKING THE TALK

1. Is there anything else Leti should be keeping in mind, but isn't?
2. If Leti does decide to pursue a relationship with Jaxson, what might be the consequences for their team, if it doesn't work out? If it does?
3. If Leti pursues a relationship with Jaxson, what is the most prudent and professional way for them to handle it in terms of their company/management? Their team?
4. How could the situation change if Leti is accepted into the management training program?

#### WALKING THE WALK

1. How likely is something like this at our company?
2. If Leti and Jaxson worked here, how would we want them to address the situation?
3. How well do we communicate our expectations in terms of workplace boundaries and relationships?
4. Many might say that romantic relationships at work are particularly complicated right now, but nonetheless people still develop feelings. How do we help them navigate the complexities of workplace relationships?

## FROM THE ECI DATABANK

### ACCORDING TO A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY VAULT.COM<sup>1</sup>

While the majority of respondents don't have a problem with relationships between colleagues in principle, many believe that some rules should apply.

The most common "unacceptable" romances:

♥ co-workers at different levels (33%);

♥ those who work on projects together (30%);

♥ and those who work in the same department (24%).

[J]ust 6% of respondents believe that workplace romances are never acceptable".



In a Career Builder study,<sup>2</sup> thirty-six percent of employees said they had dated a coworker. Of those, 31 percent ended up marrying the person they dated and 30 percent dated someone above them in the organization.

Aside from online meetings, work was the most common meeting place for couples.<sup>3</sup>



1. <http://www.vault.com/blog/general-articles/romance-is-in-the-air-the-2016-office-romance-survey-results-are-here#slideshowAnchor>

2. <http://press.careerbuilder.com/2018-02-01-Office-Romance-Hits-10-Year-Low-According-to-CareerBuilders-Annual-Valentines-Day-Survey>

3. <https://www.pnas.org/content/110/25/10135.full>