

Warning to Employees: Don't Use Your Company Computer to Look For Love

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While online dating has been pervasive in American society, it can be actionable if employees abuse their employer's access to the Internet to look for love. The case of Roberto Rodriguez, a former employee of the Social Security Administration (SSA), is a prime example. He received a sentence of 12 months in federal prison for using his work computer to obtain information about women for whom he held romantic notions. In sum, he stole company data.

His position with the SSA authorized Rodriguez to access a database containing people's personal information although SSA policies strictly prohibited access for purposes unrelated to work. After Rodriguez met various women on his own time, he used his work PC to research private information about them. Then, he sent the women gifts and notes, although the ladies themselves had not revealed personal data to Rodriguez on their own.

Although he did not use the information for any criminal purpose, *per se*, Rodriguez was nonetheless convicted of violating the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. In affirming his conviction last month, the Eleventh District Court ruled he behaved outside the specific authorization he was granted for his job.

Because the SSA had a clearly [written policy](#) prohibiting behavior such as Rodriguez's strengthened the case against him that he acted outside the scope of the authority his job afforded him. This case should also serve to remind employers of the importance of having clear policies concerning use of computers and company information.

About Beth Lincow Cole

The [Law Office of Beth Lincow Cole](#) is committed to helping employers comply with federal and state employment law and avoid potential business wrecking lawsuits. If your company needs assistance in the areas of employment law, contract law, non-compete and confidentiality agreements, wrongful termination, [sexual harassment](#), unemployment benefits or other equal employment concerns including race, sex, [disability](#) or age discrimination, [contact employment law attorney](#) Beth Lincow Cole.

Beth Lincow Cole has worked for large regional and national law firms, focusing solely on employment issues, on behalf of management within a wide range of industries. Whether you are a start up company with basic questions about personnel files or a larger company with questions

about an employee's Family Medical Leave, Beth Lincow Cole can help. Drawing on her experiences, she counsel's companies in the following practice areas:

- Defense in administrative agency matters such as before the DOL, EEOC, PHRC or NJDCR
- Department of Labor Audits
- Discrimination
- Downsizing/Reduction in Force
- Drug Testing
- Employment Contracts and Severance Agreements
- Employment Law Compliance
- FMLA and other family leave laws
- Independent Contractors/Contingent Workforce

Please contact the firm to find out how the Law Office of Beth Lincow Cole can protect your company.