

Skip the Hearts and Flowers at Work for Valentine's Day

2/13/2012

Valentine's Day is right around the corner, and while you might be tempted to show your affection to colleagues with candy, flowers or thoughtful cards, but labor attorney Steve Palazzolo has one suggestion: Don't.

"What may be intended as a thoughtful gesture on one employee's part can be perceived as sexual harassment on another's," said Palazzolo, an attorney at Warner Norcross & Judd LLP. "What worked for us in elementary school does not translate successfully to the office. To avoid conflict – or, even worse, violating discrimination laws – tread very carefully in this area."

Palazzolo offers some common-sense dos and don'ts to ensure Valentine's Day causes no heartburn:

- Remember, it's not Christmas or New Years. Be careful about wishing your employees a Happy Valentine's Day – Steve suggests leaving that to spouses, children and close friends outside the office
- No naughty cards, suggestive e-mails or fun postings around the water fountain. While you might find them funny, your colleagues could see the gesture as sexual harassment. Steve suggests cards should never be shared within the workplace – even if you bring one for everyone in your office
- No gifts. The nature of the holiday implies love and romance, so your flowers or jewelry could be easily misconstrued by someone you supervise. If you'd like to do something nice, Steve suggests buying a box of candy and sharing it with the entire office or taking your team – all of them -- out to lunch.

For more information on Warner's Labor and Employment Group, [visit](#).