



TIP OF THE WEEK

December 4, 2007

My wife and partner, Jennie, has a master's in social work and is a certified master executive coach. She says the most complicated relationships are what are called dual relationships. Here's an example: your best salesperson is dating the head of your customer service department.

The problem with dual relationships is they decrease objectivity. Roles get confused, and it's not always clear to either party which role is dominant. Are you speaking to me as my boss, or as my friend? Should I respond as your business partner, or your spouse, and will you perceive the difference? Blurry boundaries make communication more complicated, and wasn't it complicated enough already?

Do you have any dual relationships? Imagine one of your subordinates is the coach of your son's baseball team and you have to let them go. You must be clear the firing is for a business reason. No one wants to find themselves with a wrongful termination suit that mentions the benching of their kid in the Big game. Jennie suggests that both parties acknowledge the situation and possible ramifications before it becomes a problem. Establish rules for when to seek objective advice or excuse yourself from an important decision.

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Good luck. Work **ON** your business. Stay in touch.

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