Perceptions aside, common sense tells us to put policy into practice!

Here Are Five Best Practices You Can Pass Along

**#1: Suggestive or sexual materials don't belong in the workplace.**
Period! That means the Victoria's Secret catalog, even if it's shared only among women, even a video clip of Janet Jackson's revealing moment at the Superbowl half-time show. Yes, it was aired on national television, but that doesn't mean a reasonable person wouldn't find it offensive.

**#2: Your co-workers aren't your family.**
A friendly working atmosphere is a good thing. If you treat a colleague as you would a spouse, significant other, parent, or child, however, it's time to reevaluate the relationship. Get back on the professional track.

**#3: Eliminate derogatory language.**
If someone says "This project is a b-tch" or "The computer system is f---ed up," you should ask them not to use such language. True, some courts have recognized that this sort of shop talk isn't sexual in nature. Nonetheless, some people find it offensive, and the workplace is better off without it.

**#4: Keep terms of endearment at home.**
That includes "honey," "sweetie," "dear," "chick," "sugar," etc. Even if it's not harassment, a term that's meant affectionately or as a joke can easily be inferred as condescending. Also, be aware of terms like "mom" and "gramps." Such names may be viewed as derogatory or disrespectful toward older employees.

**#5: Beware of the nonverbals.**
One often cited federal sexual harassment case describes a supervisor as making the sound "um um um" in the presence of an attractive subordinate. Other cases have included staring as allegedly offensive conduct. Put your supervisors on notice that sexual innuendo can come in the form of comments, sounds, expressions, or gestures. Regardless of the form it takes, it isn't appropriate or professional conduct.

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**Title IX of the Educational Amendments of '72 protects the rights of those who report instances of sex discrimination even if the conduct was not directed at them.**

**Decision: Mar. 27, 2005**

After four months of hearing oral arguments in Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Education, the Supreme Court held that