

Nepotism Quiz

written by Rory Lodge | July 5, 2020



QUESTION

Is all the Nepotism in the workplace bad??

ANSWER

No.

A family member or friend may:

- Be highly skilled and experienced
- Bring new opportunities and investment to the organization
- Help introduce a happier and more jovial atmosphere
- Become a valued friend and colleague, like any other employee

PREAMBLE

Nepotism and Favouritism

Favouritism and nepotism can sap the morale of a workforce. It gives the impression that not everybody plays by the same rules. However, the nature of human interaction and interpersonal relationships can make it difficult for employers to identify and address nepotism and favouritism.

Key Questions

At what point does praising and rewarding a high performing employee become favouritism? When is hiring a family member into the organization 'preferential'? Is there anything employers can do to reduce nepotism and favouritism in the workplace?

WHY IS IT RIGHT

Nepotism at work

Simply put, nepotism in the workplace means giving advantageous opportunities to family or friends at work. There are innumerable examples of it: a business owner inviting their son or daughter for a summer internship; hiring a family member to a position that denied internal promotion; or awarding a contract to a firm owned by a family friend.

Ingredients for nepotism (or favouritism)

A person in a position of power and influence in the organization offers jobs and

'leg ups' to family and friends. This may or may not be to the direct detriment of employees existing or prospective.

With favouritism one or more employees receive special treatment from decision-makers. It can include being invited to closed meetings, being granted additional perks, choice of work or working hours, bigger raises and even promotions.

Examples of blatant nepotism and favouritism

- Hiring a family member who does not meet qualification or experience requirements for a job
- Letting certain employees (family, friends or favoured staff) break rules or convention (such as additional leave, faster promotions, bigger raises)
- Taking specific employees out for lunch and having business discussions while excluding equally qualified peers
- Exchanging sexual favours for career advancement
- An executive promotes an employee he or she trusts into a hiring position, then using them to hire family and friends indirectly

Nepotism in the workplace

It is a misconception that nepotism can affect the workplace only negatively. A family member or friend may:

- Be highly skilled and experienced
- Bring new opportunities and investment to the organization
- Help introduce a happier and more jovial atmosphere
- Become a valued friend and colleague, like any other employee

Anecdotally, many people have reported that otherwise terse and strict bosses have become more mellow and empathetic after their child completed an internship/employment role at the company.

Conversely, nepotism can also become a cause for negativity.

- Unsuitable family and friends may reduce productivity
- They may not be motivated to drive the organization forwards
- Regular employees may feel frustrated for not being promoted
- Respect for the organization's employment policy may decrease

Every incident of nepotism is different and must be assessed individually.

Why is nepotism bad?

Favouritism and nepotism has the potential to cause a loss of productivity. If under-qualified family members or friends are given the best assignments, the organization will lose out on business opportunities. Unmotivated employees may then spend their time gossiping, reducing overall productivity.

Worst of all, if the favoured person doesn't perform to the same expectations as other employees, it will affect the morale of the workforce. Regular employees will feel frustrated and resentful about missing out on growth within the organization.

WHY IS EVERYTHING ELSE WRONG

Exceptions for people aged 65 years and over

Family/friend hiring if it is shown to be in line with the policies of the

organization

Anti-nepotism can flow the other way too. An organization cannot discriminate or exclude individuals on the basis of family status. Examples of this are in caregiving, where caregivers have been denied grants or funding solely because they were related to the elderly or disabled.

Lots of employers play favorites amongst their employees. There are situations where employees feel that they are being treated unfairly because they are not family or friends with a supervisor or owner of the company. Does an employer have to treat all employees "fairly," and when is unfair treatment illegal?

It is illegal to discriminate against employees on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, and sex, among other things. It is not illegal to have favorite employees or to treat all employees the same. It is very common to hire family members or friends of owners, supervisors, or other employees, and it is legal to hire those friends and family members over other applicants and to treat them better as employees- most of the time.

The Legalities

"Nepotism" is the practice of giving jobs or favorable treatment to friends and family members. Nepotism in and of itself is not illegal. A company owner is allowed to hire a daughter, son, sibling, friend, or any other person they like, even if that person is not the most qualified for the job. In fact, hiring and promoting family is an extremely common employment practice dating back to the beginning of employment.

However, what some people may consider "nepotism" becomes illegal when it is actually determined to be illegal discrimination. For example, say a small business owner belongs to a certain church. If the business owner only hires people from the same church or religion, or gives employees from the same church or religion preferential treatment over other employees, this goes beyond just hiring a family member- this is religious discrimination, because employees are being treated worse based on their religion.

Another example of "nepotism" crossing the line into illegal employment practices that we see frequently is letting family get away with illegal behavior. Just because an employer is used to putting up with a relative's bad behavior does not mean the relative's coworkers should be subjected to illegal harassment too. If an employee engages in sexual harassment, or racial harassment or some other illegal behavior in the workplace, and the employer lets it go without taking action because the harasser is family, the employer's tolerance of that harassment is illegal.