Honey Pot Awareness and Relationship Disclosure Policy

SAMPLE POLICY for adaptation. Replace the highlighted fields before use.

Company	[Company name]	**Document ID**	[POL-###]
Version	1.0	**Effective date**	[date]
Policy owner	[name, title]	**Approved by**	[name, title]
Applies to	All personnel (see 2)	**Next review**	[date, within 12 months]

Version	Date	Author	Summary of change
1.0	[date]	[name]	Initial release
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

1. Purpose

1.1 To protect our people, customers and confidential information from individuals who use personal or romantic relationships, flattery or manufactured friendship to gain information, access or influence.

1.2 To set a clear, consistent rule for romantic and sexual relationships in the workplace, so that conflicts of interest and power imbalances are disclosed and managed early.

1.3 To make it safe to raise concerns early and without fear of retaliation.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all personnel: employees, founders, executives, board members, contractors, interns and temporary workers (together, "personnel").

2.2 It applies to conduct online and offline, at work, at company events and while representing the company, and to relationships between personnel and external parties where company information or access may be involved.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Honey pot (or honey trap):** a situation in which someone uses romance, flattery or fast friendship to obtain information, access or influence.

3.2 **Reporting line:** a direct or indirect manager-to-subordinate relationship, or any role in which one person influences another's pay, performance reviews, assignments, promotion or termination.

3.3 **Confidential information:** non-public information about our company, customers, personnel, product plans, systems, security or finances.

3.4 **Designated contact:** [HR or Head of People, name], or [backup: a C-level executive or board member, name] when the designated contact is the subject of a concern.

4. Awareness: warning signs

Personnel should pay attention if someone, especially a person they do not know well:

4.1 Becomes unusually friendly, flattering or intimate very quickly, online or at an event.

4.2 Asks about product plans, customers, systems, credentials or access.

4.3 Pushes to move the conversation to private channels or asks to keep it secret.

4.4 Offers gifts, travel or favors for no clear reason, or seems to know a lot about you or your role.

5. Protecting information

5.1 Do not share confidential information in personal or social conversations, including with someone you are dating or with a new acquaintance.

5.2 Share only what is needed for the work, through approved company channels.

6. Reporting a concern

6.1 Report any concern under this policy to the designated contact within 2 business days. Reports may be made in person, by email or through [channel].

6.2 Keep any messages, call logs or other records. Do not confront the other person or investigate on your own.

6.3 The designated contact will acknowledge the report within [2] business days, review the facts, and decide on next steps, involving legal counsel where appropriate.

6.4 Reports are kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to review the concern and with the law.

6.5 A report made in good faith is always welcome, even if it turns out to be nothing.

7. Relationships in the workplace

7.1 Romantic or sexual relationships are not permitted between people in a reporting line (see 3.2).

7.2 Personnel who begin a relationship that touches this rule must tell [HR or Head of People] promptly, before any further decisions are made about the other person's work, pay or career. If the company has no one in that role, or that person is involved, tell [a C-level executive] or [a board member] instead.

7.3 After disclosure, the company will review the situation and may change reporting lines, remove a person from decisions about the other, or take other steps to remove the conflict. The aim is to manage the conflict, not to police private life.

7.4 This rule applies equally to founders, executives and board members. If a founder or executive is involved, disclosure goes to [a board member] or, if there is no board, [an outside advisor or employment counsel].

7.5 Relationships between personnel and vendors, investors, customers or candidates that could affect a business decision must also be disclosed.

8. Non-retaliation

Retaliation against anyone who makes a report, discloses a relationship or takes part in a review is a violation of this policy and will be treated seriously.

9. Training

All personnel complete a 20-minute session at hire and every year afterward, using two or three real-world scenarios. Managers receive additional guidance on handling disclosures.

10. Consequences

Failure to follow this policy, including failure to disclose a relationship when required, may lead to corrective action up to and including termination of employment or engagement, in line with applicable law.

11. Review

The policy owner reviews this policy at least once every 12 months and after any significant incident, and records changes in the version history on page 1.

12. Acknowledgment

I have read and understand this policy and agree to follow it.

Name (print)	Signature	Date

This is a sample for adaptation only and is not legal advice. Rules on workplace relationships, harassment prevention and off-duty conduct vary by state, so have an employment lawyer review it before you adopt it.

Want help adapting this for your startup? Denise · denise@poppy-os.com · linkedin.com/in/denmath · peopletrendsforstartups.com