

# Image Sabotage

**Some bad choices can take you down**

**A high-profile official makes important decisions nearly every day.**



**In some cases, the wrong choices can lead to career disasters.**

**Here are five critical mistakes every superintendent should avoid.**

## **A**ct Recklessly

Never assume you have privacy in your work environment, including your office, the halls, the break room, elevators, entrances, and even the restroom. Remember that equipment and internet services are the property of the district.. Always be aware of what you say or write and to whom you say or send it. Never make crude remarks.

## **C**onduct Personal Business at Work

The company e-mail and phone systems are for company business. Keep personal phone calls brief and few -- and never take a call that will require a box of tissues to get through. Also, never type anything in an e-mail that you don't want read by your boss; many systems save deleted messages to a master file. And we can't tell you how many poor souls have gotten fired for hitting the "Reply All" button and disseminating off-color jokes -- or worse yet -- rants about their boss for all to see.

## **A**ppear Unprofessional

How others see you matters. They draw conclusions based on how you look and the way you conduct yourself. At all times be well-groomed and dressed suitably for the occasion. Always demonstrate solid character, use good grammar, and never use obscenities. A competent and principled image is a career must.

## **H**ave a Workplace Affair

Romance at work is dicey at best. Dating anyone who has a close working relationship with the district guarantees you will be the subject of constant gossip. Any inappropriate involvement with a subordinate risks sexual harassment charges. A relationship with a board member can be catastrophic.

## **P**lay Safe

Leadership is about moving the district forward. If you spend all your time in the safety zone and your top priority is avoiding controversy, you're failing your responsibilities. Don't be afraid to fail or make mistakes. Be measured and strategic, yet demonstrate passion and a commitment to continuous improvement. If an effort fails, acknowledge it and then make clear to everyone that you are resilient and determined. You seize the opportunity to learn and then you move on. Remember, over time, risk-aversion will create a reputation for "status quo" and it will be more hazardous to your career than error.