

Dear Mary Pat: How Do I Go From Being a Co-worker to Being the New Office Manager?

Dear Mary Pat,

I have recently been promoted to the Office Manager position. I'm nervous and excited all at one time. I'm worried about how the staff is going to react since I'm their friend and we have great times together at the office and out of the office. What is your recommendation on my future change in title and my relationship with the staff?

T.

Dear T.,

Congratulations on your promotion to Office Manager!

It can be very hard to successfully move from being a co-worker to being the office manager, but it can definitely be done. It took me a long time to be able to separate my relationships with the staff from my responsibilities as a manager. I tell people who work for me that if we have a personal friendship, it will in no way change any decision I make as a manager and I stick to that.

This is my recommendation:

Meet with each of the staff one on one and talk to them about your concerns. Tell them you value their friendship and the relationship you've had, but in your new role you might be called upon to fulfill some duties that they would classify as "unfriendly." Let them know that you are taking your new responsibilities seriously and that you will need to protect the organization first and foremost. Tell them that the best outcome for everyone is a win-win situation where the employee and the organization are both winners, but if it comes down to

a hard decision, you will need to act in the best interest of the practice.

As far as how you act:

Read my article on eating lunch with the staff. Do not get drawn into discussions about work with the staff when at social events. Try never to drink with co-workers so you don't say something you'll regret in the morning! No matter what, keep things confidential. Be careful what you share, even with the physicians, as they sometimes are unable to keep confidences. Make sure to tell the same thing to all staff, for instance, put policy changes or protocol changes in writing so everyone hears the same thing. Be very careful to not be seen as having favorites.

I hope this helps and please write back with more questions!

Best wishes,
Mary Pat