Effective Communication: The Employee Handbook

Employee handbooks explain the relationship and responsibilities of employee and employer and provide clear communication on a variety of employment topics. A well-written employee handbook establishes guides for the workplace and protects the employer from liability.

A Guide
Handbooks specify expectations, rules and compensation. A comprehensive employee handbook will include information regarding compensation, benefits, dress code, human resources issues, time off, workers' compensation, performance reviews, discipline and rewards, drug and alcohol policies, anti-discrimination policies, social media usage, safety guidelines and various other behavioral and procedural expectations.

Legal Protection
When drafting your employee handbook, it is essential to be aware of and adherent to all federal, state and local laws that might apply. The employee handbook should clearly define the applicable legal obligations and rights of both the employer and employee.

The employee handbook is vital from a legal standpoint—in many employment lawsuits, the handbook will be a key piece of evidence that can either protect your company or provide ammunition for an employee (or former employee) who is suing you. You can drastically reduce your liability by clearly laying out all employee expectations and prohibited behavior.

Plain English and Readily Available
Thorough, up-to-date, legally compliant, understandable and readily available—these are the essential characteristics of an effective employee handbook.

Aside from keeping a current copy easily accessible to employees, it is also wise to have employees sign a form stating that they received and reviewed the employee handbook. This signature will ensure that an employee cannot later claim that he or she was unaware of a particular policy.
Time Crunch

HR departments are often short on time and inundated with numerous important tasks. With increasing pressure and a time crunch for all the responsibilities in HR, finding time to write an employee handbook, much less keep it properly updated, can be difficult.

CoStaff Services can provide you with educational resources and dozens of sample handbook policies to assist you as you put together your employee handbook and work to keep it updated. You can reach CoStaff Services at 248.671.1400 or by visiting www.costaffservices.com.

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