
Employee Handbooks Set Forth Expectations

There are any number of reasons why an employee handbook should be in use. Some of them are as follows:

- Employee manuals bring in uniformity across the organization. They set guidelines for everyone to follow and categorically state the consequences of violating these rules. Employee manuals inform employees of statutory laws regarding workplace behavior with colleagues and management. Thus, they help prevent workplace conflicts and legal disputes.
- With a well-planned and written handbook, you can save your managers' time. They need not explain the same policies every time a new employee joins or answer the same questions over and over again.
- Employee manuals publish information on an organization's policies about holidays, leave, work hours, overtime work and pay procedure, dress code, performance reviews, salary or pay revisions and recreational breaks. They present information on orientation and training policies and termination or relieving procedures. This helps employees know a lot about the kind of treatment they can expect in the organization, thus, building their confidence.
- Employee handbooks help communicate to the employees about the Company's expectations of them. A handbook is a tool to provide clear boundaries for the employee. You can convey performance parameters and benefits that employees receive on reaching those parameters. Policies about promotion or demotion should be included. This will help them gain clarity on their job responsibilities and reduce the start-up time.
- Employee handbooks present the organization's policies on using the Company's as well as personal gadgets and other equipment within its premises. Some organizations have restrictions on the use of information and communication devices, most importantly, mobile phones. Handbooks should include the terms and conditions for the use of these devices and the sites the employees are not expected to visit etc.
- Employee handbooks publish the Company's policies on employee safety measures and procedures to handle occupational accidents or hazards.

Employers can clearly communicate to employees how they should behave, what they should wear and how they will compensate, discipline and reward employees. Employees will understand their responsibilities and have a reference point for how to do their jobs and maintain their status.

Employee Handbooks Protect Employers

Clear policies and procedures can prevent liability. Many state courts may consider an employee handbook to be a binding contract, even if the employment relationship is at-will. If an employee has a dispute with his employer or gets a bad performance review, he may try to use the employee handbook as leverage or to prove some deficiency on the employer's part. A well-written and clear handbook can protect an employer; it sets forth a structure so when issues arise, neither the employee nor the employer will be surprised by the outcome.

Your employee handbook should be written in simple and precise language. It should have enough detail to articulate employee's responsibilities, but it should not have so much information that it overwhelms the reader. The size of the company and the company's area of business will dictate some of the handbook's content, but generally it should contain information about pay, benefits, dress code, human resources issues, leave, workers' compensation, performance reviews, retirement, drug and alcohol policies, safety and discipline. It should avoid certain types of promises and should follow federal, state and local guidelines.

Since employee handbooks are an effective means to protect an organization from potential lawsuits, they should be kept updated. This is because laws change. Accordingly, you need to modify your policies and publish them in your handbook.

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