

Importance of employee handbook

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Although an employee handbook is designed for employees, it is important for the employers as well. Not only should it focus on the rules, regulations and benefits for the employees, but it should be founded on the principles, objectives and goals of the company as well. Implementing an employee handbook is very crucial. Publishing an employee handbook is a means to uniformly distribute policies and procedures to all employees. The company could defend itself against many employee-related claims through clear policies written in the handbook, as opposed to merely posting them on bulletin boards or conveying them verbally.

For instance, terminated employees usually file a lawsuit alleging that the employer breached an implied contract of employment. Thus, it is imperative to include the following disclaimers in the handbook's introduction: (a) the handbook is not an employment contract; and (b) employees may be dismissed at the discretion of the company, so long as the reason is lawful. On the other hand, it could also be used by employees to defend themselves against wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment claims, and other cases where they feel that they are being treated unfairly.

As accusations of sexual, racial, and ethnic harassment commonly occur in the workplace today, the non-harassment policy should also be clearly described. A detailed complaint process should also be included. There are several ways to encourage employees to read and use their handbook. First, the handbook should be written in simple English. Acronyms and technical jargon should be avoided wherever possible. A glossary of terms should be included to assist the newcomers in adjusting to the workplace.

Second, it should be concise and easy to understand by writing in short paragraphs and including diagrams. It should be written from the perspective of someone who does not know anything about the organization and the workplace. Third, it would help the employees when the handbook is written in a friendly and informal style, instead of a strict, formal style. Fourth, the manual should look as attractive as possible, with its layout presented in a methodical manner. A clear table of contents and indices make it easy for the employee to use.

Lastly, effectiveness of the manual should be assessed by asking someone quite new to the industry to provide feedback. Those knowledgeable about the law should also look through it to make certain that the content is lawful (Solich, 2007). (2) In the United States, although private businesses are entitled to restrict almost any sort of private, non-business discussion, almost all workplaces permit a certain amount of non-business-related chatter. Generally, the main policy is to limit discussion that could interfere with the daily business activities and violate the rights of other employees.

In this way, employees can be protected from harassment, workplace hostility, and discrimination (Harty-Golder, 2003). However, the doctrine of “employment at will” has allowed the companies to exercise their right to terminate employees who expressed negative opinions related to their employer or their work. While pragmatists advise to place one’s job over citizen rights if freely expressing himself would cause him his job, it might leave him feeling caged as he wonders how this restriction on speech could be right.

Recently, there have been reported cases where voicing out negative opinions related to their employers within or off the workplace caused the employees to be terminated. (Roychoudhuri, 2007; Savage, 2006; Penolino, 2005; Kushikab, 2006). Specifically, the most recent of these cases are due to expressing their negative opinions in their blogs. This “ puts a chill” on everyone, as it sends the employees a clear message—that they are being monitored so they should watch out what they say (Barry, 2007 cited in businessweek. com).

Since they restrict free speech, it is imperative for the companies to establish clear policies on employees’ freedom of expression, especially in terms of what is allowed and what is forbidden. (3) The benefits a company offers should be considered in weighing job options. The laws of U. S. require companies to offer a minimum level of benefits, so those who are employed have a right to receive them. Aside from basic health insurance, comprehensive benefits packages are being offered by companies. These benefits can help the employees lead healthy and productive lives.

There have been new emerging benefits ideas such as prenatal care, smoking cessation, weight loss programs, gym subsidies, on-site flu shots, CPR training, and retiree health-care benefits. There are also helpful benefits that are not directly related to health, such as relocation package to help spouses of new employees find jobs; family transition packages to help family members find jobs, schools, activities, and others; " lifestyle" benefits such as dry-cleaning services, legal assistance, on-site cash machines, and health insurance for pets; domestic-partner benefits; and child care benefits.

These benefits have to be taken into consideration before taking a job offer. Not only are these benefits valuable to you, but they also reflect how much a company cares about the well-being of its employees.

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