

Developing Effective Employee Policies

Effective employee policies can really streamline an operation, yet so many small businesses fail to find the time to write proper employee manuals. Here's a quick guide to getting it done.

Formal employee policies are really important for setting clear guidelines that can be easily referred to. However, for small businesses, having hundreds of pages of manuals often isn't worth the time it takes to write them.

What *is* important is developing effective employee policies so that all staff know where they stand and what the regulations are. It's important to identify what's important to the business and what you expect of employees, as well as what they can expect of you and the company.

Look at all the legal requirements and develop tailored employee policies that include the following.

Leave Arrangements

This outlines how vacation time is earned as well as any holidays the company observes. You can also include sick leave or carer's leave here.

It's important to have a sick day policy so that employees know what to do and who to call if they are sick and can't come to work. Any forms they need to fill out should be easy to locate and process.

If you make clear your expectations of employee attendance from the start then it won't be an issue. More importantly, lead by example and create a strong culture so that staff enjoy coming to work and are productive when they're there.

When the time comes for an employee to leave the company, a clear policy about either party terminating the employment contract should be in writing so there are no misunderstandings about the length of notice, payments and other conditions.

Hours Of Work

Information about overtime, punctuality, work schedules and flexible working arrangements must be made obvious from the start.

If working from home is an option for employees, have clear guidelines about the procedures around it, especially access to company computers and networks, and security policies around data.

Non-Statutory Perks

It's up to you to determine if you will provide other benefits to staff, but be clear about what these are from the outset. Whether it's healthcare, relocation assistance, education courses or staff referral schemes, consider what will be best for your company, the culture, employee development and the budget.

These might change regularly, so be prepared to update the manual as soon as it's out of date.

Expectations About Conduct and Discipline

Standards of performance and behaviour at work are crucial to outline for a smooth working environment. Commonly this includes a policy on employee harassment, smoking, how employees can use the Internet or email, and dress code.

Anti-Discrimination and Safety Policies

It's important to provide a safe and fair environment, so include information about equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies, as well as where employees can go for further assistance. Occupational health and safety and worker's compensation practices should also be covered.

Finally, remember that all employee policies must be written clearly and set out so they're easy for everyone to understand and refer to. Effective administration is a great tool for communicating with employees, so make strong policies, follow them up and be willing to adapt them where you can.