

TOP TIPS FOR AN EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Staff or company handbooks are not compulsory by law, but they provide the ideal way to set out your business' policies and procedures in one place. Employee handbooks are unique and work best when they are tailored to each individual business; it is not a case of one size fits all.

Include the most important provisions

These are:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Disciplinary Rules and Procedures
- Grievance Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection
- Family Leave

These policies directly involve the safety and welfare of your employees.

Use the handbook as a communication tool

Set out your business' expectations for how employees should behave and communicate in the workplace. Make it clear what sort of communication or behaviour will not be tolerated.

Safety & security

Outline what steps should be taken if an employee is injured at work, in the event of a robbery, drug and alcohol intolerances, criminal records, and in the event of emergencies such as fires or severe weather.

Outline your expectations

Include your business' values, expectations and mission. This is your chance to clearly define your business' position so there is no room for doubt. This also gives you something to reference when it comes time to enforce these expectations. You should also outline all legal expectations in this section. If there is a legal matter, this handbook can help to protect your business from accusation.

Get a legal review

An employee handbook is a crucial document in situations where a legal issue or dispute arises. As much as you might not think you'll experience legal issues with your employees, you can never be too cautious. Once you have drafted your employee handbook, get a legal review to make sure you aren't putting yourself in a sticky situation.

Code of conduct

If you don't want your employees using their mobile phones while they're at work, make that clear. Be sure to include policies on lunch breaks, shift swaps, acting in a certain way during working hours, handling overtime and what employees should wear at work.

Don't duplicate

Cross reference your employee handbook in the legal docs you get your employees to sign. This will prevent the need for duplication, it will encourage your employees to visit and read the handbook and will keep your employees well informed.

Make it readable

It is important that your handbook is accessible to your employees. Use plenty of headings, sub-headings, bullet points, and paragraph breaks to make your handbook easy to read, skim and come back to when someone needs to find a specific section.

Leave room for change

As your business grows, the way you conduct your business changes and therefore the procedures of your employees will change as well. Your handbook needs to be able to adapt to change so that your employees aren't stuck in old procedures and systems that are no longer relevant. Keep in mind that laws may change, which will also be a good opportunity to update your handbook.

Discrimination

Nine characteristics are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race

- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Your employment contract and/or staff handbook should clearly outline your organisation's policy towards discrimination, equal opportunities, situations where discrimination can arise (such as advertising for vacant positions), how you protect employees from it and the process that will be followed if an allegation of discrimination is made.

Get in touch

For further information, please contact Millie Kempley whose details are below.



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Redundancy

Employers should have a proper redundancy procedure, which would normally consist of:

- A written intent to maintain job security where practicable
- Details of the consultation process
- Guidance on the selection criteria used to make redundancies
- Details of severance terms
- Details of how the employer will help affected employees find work

The information contained in this document is for general information purposes only and should not be relied on in isolation without seeking further legal advice that is specifically applicable to your circumstances.