Why Your Company Needs a Work Manual

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

Providing your employees with a Work Manual that includes both company policies and company procedures helps both your business and your employees. It helps set employee expectations about the company's work environment and communicate corporate standards and procedures. A Work Manual can help your business increase professionalism and efficiency in the following ways:

- As a reference point for employees so that HR/managers do not have to repeatedly answer questions on policies or procedures.
- As a training tool that can be used to help with employee induction.
- As a guide for how your employees should deal with customers
- As a manual to improve the quality and consistency of service you provide to customers.
- As a means of clarifying who is responsible for specific tasks within the business.
- As a reference guide to help settle employee misunderstandings and avoid conflicts.
- By providing clear rules to protect your company from potential misuse of computer systems and IT resources.
- As evidence of company expectations should you need to dismiss an employee.

A Work Manual doesn't just help employers. Employees also like to know where they stand. A Work Manual helps employees by:

- Providing clear guidelines on how to do their job and what is expected of them.
- Providing information on how an employee can expect to be dealt with by both the employer and other employees.
- Creating a culture where issues are dealt with fairly and consistently.
- Acting as a motivational tool by outlining the opportunities that are available to employees in terms of training, career advancement and flexible working practices.
- Setting policies that help identify and prevent potential risks to employees (e.g. health and safety/money laundering) and ensure that they comply with the law.
- Setting standards to reduce the need for disciplinary and legal action.

So what should you include in the Office Manual?

This publication[1] looks at the policies, procedures and other information you should include in a Work Manual. Some key policies must be provided by law; others should be considered for best practice.
In those areas where having a policy is not a legal requirement, it's still good practice to have one so that workers understand what you expect of them and what they can expect to get in return. Policies also help to create a culture where issues are dealt with fairly and consistently.

You don't have to have a staff policy on every single aspect of your business. Indeed some types of policy may be irrelevant or unhelpful. However, you are legally required to have written policies on certain things such as disciplinary and grievance procedures and health and safety (if you have five or more employees). The table below shows which of the following common policies is a legal requirement.
It also makes good business sense to set out your expectations on more general company policies such as confidentiality, ownership of copyright and designs, dress code and use of company facilities.

Common types of policy	Minimum legal requirement?	
	Yes	No
Maternity/paternity/ adoption	✓	
Leave and absence	✓	
Equal opportunities	✓	
Working hours and overtime	✓	
Health and safety	✓	
Pay	✓	
Dealing with harassment, victimisation and bullying	✓	
Conduct, disciplinary	✓	
Rewards, benefits and expenses		✓
Measures to improve performance or manage change		✓
Use of company facilities, e.g. e-mail, Internet and phone use		✓
Training		✓
Right of search		✓

Source: BusinessLink

The policies that you implement will depend on the size and nature of your business: different policies will be more relevant to some businesses than others.

Overview

A Work Manual can be referred to or described as Office Manual, Employee Handbook, Policy and Procedures Manual… but, in essence, they are all the same thing.

A policy can be part of your employee/company handbook or you could set it out in a separate document. However, for your discipline and grievance policies, you must either set them out in the written statement or refer in the written statement to a place where the employee can read them, eg the company intranet.
You should make staff aware that your policies exist, particularly during the induction process, and make sure workers can easily access them if necessary, e.g. by having them pinned up on a notice-board or put on the company intranet.

What policies should you adopt?

The policies that you have will depend on the size and nature of your business. For example, if your employees operate machinery, it may be a good idea to implement a specific policy on drugs and alcohol use. If most of your employees use computers most of the time, you should have an e-mail and internet policy.

There are many benefits to having suitable employment policies in place. Setting standards is the key to healthy workplace relations. It can reduce the need for disciplinary and legal action. It may also increase productivity and morale, as well as help employee retention.

Clear policymaking can also be positive for your business' reputation externally, e.g. among clients and the local community. It can also help in attracting new staff.

Please note that it is a legal requirement to set out your health and safety policy in writing if you have five or more employees. It is also a legal requirement to set out your disciplinary rules and discipline and grievance procedures in writing.

The Work Manual

The Work Manual should include the work policies and procedures that have been prepared in accordance with employment legislation and that form part of the terms of employment for each employee.

The policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they comply with current legislation and regulations. It should be made clear how any changes to the manual will be notified, for example via e-mail or via the company's Intranet.

The manual should include a statement that makes clear that the policies and procedures are not intended to be contractual commitments, that no policy is intended as a guarantee of continuity of benefits or rights and that no permanent employment or employment for any term is intended or can be implied from any statements in the Work Manual.

Consideration should be given to inclusion of the following sections.

Introduction to the Company

This section should provide an introduction to the company and its culture followed by information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- The Company's history
- Partners, Directors and Associates
- Company Objectives/Mission
- Sources of Technical Support
- Organisation Chart
- Intranet details (and the Client/Customer Extranet)
- Statement of Growth, Profit, and Business Plan
- Managers
- Statement of Commitment to Employees
- Continuity of Policies - Right to Change or Discontinue

At the end of this section there should be an acknowledgment of receipt that each employee should sign. They should then retain a copy of the manual for their records.

The Business

This section should include a description of the range of services that the company offers or the products it sells. For example, for an accountancy firm these may include audit, accountancy, taxation, business consultancy, insolvency and other services.

Employment Policies

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to employment. Where appropriate, employees should sign their agreement to certain policies. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Recruitment Policy
- Recruitment of Future Directors and Employees
- Announcement of New Positions
- Employee Selection Process
- Making an Employment Offer
- Induction Procedure - New Employees
- Employee Leaving Checklist
- Eligibility to Work in the UK
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Rehiring of Former Employees
- Employment of Relatives

Legal Status

Work policies generally aren't contractually binding unless they expressly state otherwise. However, terms of some policies could be seen as contractually binding via custom and practice, for example, where workers follow certain working practices or receive certain benefits over a significant period of time.

- Return to Work after Serious Injury or Illness
- Lateness/Absenteeism
- Confidentiality of the Firm's Information
- Conflict of Interest
- Policy on Whistleblowing at Work
- Medical Evaluations and Interviews
- Disability Accommodation
- Outside Employment
- Sickness or Injury
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Gratuities to Government Employees or Officials
- Gratuities to Customers or Suppliers
- Inventions, Patents and Copyright
- Competence
- Career Development
- Employee Feedback

Employment Status & Records

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to employment status. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Undertaking Other Duties
- Changes - in types and levels of employment
- Anniversary Date (for review purposes)
- Reinstatement - after Redundancy or after Voluntary Registration
- Retirement Policy
- Flexible Working Policies
- Employment Classifications - Regular Full-Time, Regular Part-Time and Temporary Employees
- Access to Personnel Files
- Background Checks
- Performance Review and Salary Merit
- Job Descriptions and Standard Profiles
- Equal Pay Policies
- Provision of references to prospective new employers

Employee Benefits

This section should provide details of the policies that relate to employee benefits. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Holiday
- Compassionate Leave
- Employer's Liability Insurance
- Sick or Personal Leave
- Electoral Voting
- Jury Service
- Training

Payroll

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to payroll. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Payment of Salaries
- Annual Merit Increases
- Payroll Deductions
- Overtime Compensation
- Termination of Employment
- Employee Leaving Checklist
- Return of the Firm's Property
- Payroll Charitable Giving

Workplace Guidelines and Information

This section should provide all the policies that relate to the workplace. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Personal Possessions
- Retention of Records
- Employer Security
- Health and Safety Policies
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Fire Regulations
- IT Security
- Use of Office Equipment
- Risk Assessment and Precautions
- Emergency Instructions
- Employee Privacy
- Workplace Search Policy
- Workday definition
- Access to the Premises
- Smoking at Work Policy
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)
- Non-Business or Social Visits
- Rented Vehicles
- Emergency Closings
- Flexitime
- Telecommuting
- Cell Phone and Telephone Usage Policy
- Photocopying
- Timekeeping
- Mail Policies
- Medical Leave of Absence
- Parental, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policies

- Pregnant Employees
- Maternity Leave Policy
- Visitors
- Recreational Activities–Sponsorships
- Conflicts of Interest
- Accepting Gifts and Entertainment
- Outside Activities and Interests in Other Businesses
- Use of Company Property and Information
- The Firm's Property and Facilities
- Company Proprietary and Other Confidential Information
- Trademarks, Service Marks and Copyrights
- Insider Dealing Laws
- Employment Policies
- Compliance with the Code of Conduct
- Substance Abuse
- Drug and Alcohol Policy
- Drug Testing
- Betting & Gambling
- Collections
- Data Protection
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (monitoring and recording of communications)
- Dress Code
- Personal Harassment Guidelines
- Sexual Harassment
- Workplace Violence
- Workplace Emergency Plan
- Training for Emergencies
- Political Activities
- Relationships with the Media

E-Policies

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to computer and IT matters. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- General Principles
- Permitted General Access
- User Responsibilities
- Privacy
- Copyright
- Harassment, Libel and Slander
- Access to Information Technology Resources
- Unauthorised Access
- Termination of Access
- Circumventing or Breaching Security
- Abuse of IT Resources
- Illegal Activity
- Game Playing
- Chain Letters
- Faxing
- Harassing, Discriminatory and Defamatory Use
- Gambling
- Online Shopping
- Unauthorised Monitoring
- Flooding or Spamming
- Private Commercial Purposes
- Political Advertising and Campaigning
- Software Privacy
- Use of Unlicensed Software
- E-mail Signatures
- Software for Home Use
- Pornography
- Guest Books, Newsgroups and Bulletin Boards
- Chat and Instant Messaging
- Other Prohibited Uses
- Unauthorised Use and Sanctions
- Virus Protection Procedures and Reducing the Risk of Contamination
- Management Access to Technology Resources
- Employee Privacy
- Monitoring
- Passwords
- Data Collection by the Firm
- Telephone Use and Voicemail
- Electronic Mail
- Desktop Facsimile Use
- Document Use
- Internet Use
- Deleted Information
- E-mail and Internet Usage Policies
- Acceptable E-mail and Internet Usage
- Chain Letters
- Use of the Internet
- Spamming
- Unsolicited E-mail Policy
- Spoofing
- Communication of Confidential and Sensitive Information via E-mail
- Blind Carbon Copies
- E-mail Ownership Policy
- E-mail Retention
- Spyware Policy
- Sexual Harassment by E-mail
- Bad Judgement/Taste
- Excessive Resource Requirements

- Public Forums
- Guest Books, Newsgroups and Bulletin Boards
- Chat and Instant Messaging
- Private Internet Use
- Content Filtering
- Making Company Purchases over the Internet
- Virus Protection
- Internet Security
- Passwords
- Virus, Trojan Horses etc
- Firewalls, Security Systems
- Disaster Recovery Policy

Dealing with Clients/Customers

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to client/customer contact. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Client/Customer Relations
- Commitment to Clients/Customers
- Dealing with Clients/Customers
- Dealing with Complaints
- Improving Our Service
- Procedures for Taking on New Business

Financial Procedures

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to financial procedures. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- The Accounting System
- Money Received
- Payment of Invoices
- Payment of Salaries
- Invoicing
- Credit Control
- Debt Recovery

Administration and Sundry Matters

This section should provide all the company wide policies that relate to administration and other sundry matters. It should include information on the following areas where appropriate to the company's business:

- Refreshments
- Meeting Room Booking Procedures
- Internal Phone Lists
- Electronic Library
- Filing System
- Office Administration
- Staff Suggestions & Internal Communication
- Database Management
- Personal Property
- Car parking
- Office Tidiness
- Storage
- Toilet Facilities
- Visitors and Confidentiality

IT Self-Analysis Questionnaire

This section can be used by an employee to record their level of expertise in the IT software used by the company. It should include a list of the common functions the employee will need to undertake as part of their job.

Writing and communicating staff policies

When writing staff policies the main steps are:

- **Preparing** - collecting information, opinions and examining the options. Policies are more likely to be accepted if staff are involved in drawing them up. Involve unions, especially if you have collective agreements that specify they should be consulted, or existing elected employee representatives. Alternatively, set up a joint working group.
- **Developing** - policies should suit the specific needs of the business.
- Implementing - inform staff and provide training.
- **Reviewing** - this is to check that the policy is being used and is not damaging the business.

Check that your policies are not unlawfully discriminatory, e.g. in relation to pay or dress/appearance.

Policies can be:

- displayed on notice-boards
- added to the company network or intranet
- communicated via presentations
- included in a staff handbook
- included in a collective agreement with a union
- e-mailed to staff
- sent as a letter to staff

Source: Business Link

Further Information

Introducing new policies

If you are planning to introduce a new policy, you should consider the following:

- What is the **purpose** of the policy?
- Have you **consulted** with managers, workers and their representatives?
- Has someone been given **overall responsibility** for the policy?
- How are you going to **communicate** the policy to all workers?
- Have you given workers enough **notice** about the new policy?
- Have you thought through the potential **cost** of the policy?
- Does the policy change anyone's employment **contract**?
- How are you going to **monitor** and **maintain** the policy?

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues.

We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

Acknowledgement

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Publication issued or updated on: 26 March 2012

Ref: 488