

imagine **HR**

NEWS

The New And Improved Employee Handbook



EMPLOYEE
HANDBOOK

Can You Imagine A Better Workplace?

REEVALUATE

Employee handbooks have been around for a long time. Most businesses know they need one and have used the handbook to not only communicate company expectations but also to protect themselves legally. Every year it's important to reevaluate your handbook to make sure all policies are still relevant and have been updated to reflect changes in employment law and also shifts in your company's culture.

REFRESH

With a new generation of workers entering our workplaces, employers are well-advised to review their current handbook with a critical eye. Employees today appreciate a well-crafted and customized handbook reflective of the company's values and culture. They want to know that the company they are working for offers competitive benefits and communicates expectations clearly. It may be time to refresh and modernize your handbook!

REWRITE

Writing a handbook is not always an easy feat. You want to ensure all necessary and recommended policies are included but do not want to overwhelm employees with an exorbitant amount of legalese or too much corporate speak. Clear, concise, and reader-friendly should be the objectives as well as making sure the tone of the handbook sounds balanced and fair (not patronizing or intimidating).



WORKPLACE COFFEE TALK FEBRUARY 24TH

My colleague, Jill Windelspecht, and I have another great virtual coffee talk planned this month – all about handbooks! We plan to discuss employee handbook policy updates and how employers can write a handbook to make sure employees actually read it! Join us for this complimentary event from 9-10AM this Thursday.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

TOP HANDBOOK POLICIES

There are policies all handbooks should include that are considered best practice. In addition, there are disclaimers and discretionary language recommended for employer protection. Here are some key policies you will want to include in your employee handbook:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity Policy**
- **Electronic Communications Policy**
- **Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy**
- **Time Off and Leave of Absence Policies**
- **General Code of Conduct Policies**
- **Health and Safety Policies**



And don't forget about setting a positive tone from the beginning with a personalized and sincere message from the leaders of the organization. Also, discussing the values, vision and history of the company will go a long way in getting new hires excited about joining your company and current employees feeling connected to a larger mission and long-term goals.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS – FIRM BUT FLEXIBLE

There is nothing more agonizing for a new employee than having to sift through wordy, confusing and condescending-sounding workplace policies. This was a sentiment shared with me by a few employees that I recently met with. In my quest to help organizations attract and retain great talent, policies matter. And it does no one any good to produce an employee handbook that feels overly punitive and prescriptive.

Many of us in HR and employment law have grown accustomed to formal policies and feel it is our duty to ensure employees do not break rules that we have worked hard to develop and implement. However, I'm finding that more and more employees are feeling insulted by the way handbooks are written – the “you are strictly prohibited from the following bad behaviors and you shall not engage in the following egregious conduct” language seems to only produce distrust and feels belittling to many of today's employees (particularly those who are intrinsically motivated and have a high level of personal accountability). A negative tone can be off-putting to high performers, and employers risk losing employees when they do not feel trusted or empowered.

Years ago, the corporate environment was more hierarchical and paternalistic in nature; employees were expected not only to follow the rules but not to question the rules. Today, organizational behavioralists are finding that while employees need clarity and appreciate a level of structure within their work environment, they do not fully thrive in a workplace that has a solely punitive orientation and is purely consequence driven. Instead, humans do better when they receive positive reinforcements, leverage their strengths, and are trusted to make good judgements and decisions.

The employee handbook can be a company's most invaluable communication tool. It should provide legal protections while also showcasing the values and vision of the organization. Ask yourself, is there an opportunity to reframe overly punitive rules as positive goals to aim for? Is there a better way to balance the language in your handbook? Perhaps even a few edits will shift the tone of the handbook and create a more inspired feeling and, hence, a more engaged and motivated workforce. Every word and sentence matters.

Think of policies as an employer's message to its employees regarding how it values people. If you believe employees need strict rules to be productive, hiring and retaining high-performing people may be a challenge for you.

Carefully evaluate the messages your handbook policies communicate. Is each rule necessary for the vast majority of adults working for you? Are you using language that makes employees feel valued and trusted?

BALANCE IS KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL HANDBOOK

Handbooks are often considered a “necessary evil” by both employers and employees. They are generally full of heavy, hard-to-read text and legalese that no one feels good reading. They often list out what not to do and how employees can get themselves fired. In my opinion, it’s time to disrupt the way handbooks have always been written.



have taken the time to design policies that make sense for their environment.

Handbooks should be no more than 20 or 30 pages. It’s also important to lay out policies in a logical manner and in a font size that makes it easy on the eyes. Including a section like “daily work practices” will give the handbook a more customized feel, addressing

actual issues and circumstances unique to your particular work environment.

In today’s climate, employers who are taking a different spin on handbooks will reap the rewards of a happier and more productive workforce. The “devil is in the details” as they say, and the success of an employee handbook truly hinges on what a business chooses to include and how they word these policies. It pays to be thoughtful about what you are putting into your handbook. The return on investment is tremendous when employees feel their company leaders

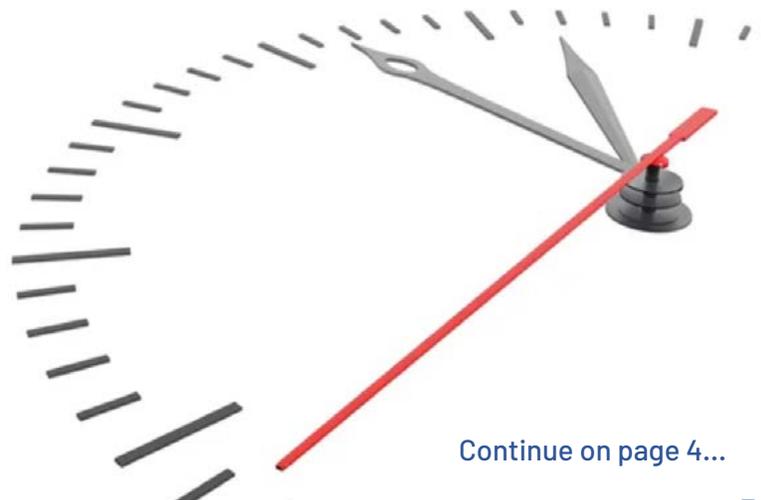
An employee handbook should be considered a living, breathing document and updated regularly. There should also be training around the policies so that management and supervisors on the front lines are taking a unified and consistent approach to employee relations issues. Consistency is critical in a time when claims are on the rise.

NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME TO REVIEW YOUR EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK!

As we know, the pandemic changed everything. The way we live and work has been disrupted in ways we could have never imagined. Organizations must adjust their way of thinking and how they are managing their workforce to continue to compete for talent in one of the tightest labor markets in history. Operating under the status quo can be dangerous for businesses today... they must review all facets of their workplace policies and determine whether they can enhance their employee benefits (first examining no cost/low-cost options) and/or provide more flexibility or growth opportunities (if possible) to help retain their most qualified and talented employees.

Including policies on health, safety and remote work arrangements are outcomes of the pandemic. In addition, bolstering policies and training around workplace communication, office etiquette and conflict resolution can also help alleviate unnecessary stress or potential complaints. There is a great deal of stress and burnout in workplaces right now and having clear workplace policies and protocols in place that give employees a feeling that their company cares about their well-being can go far in improving morale.

Last year, I reviewed approximately 10 employee handbooks, and I anticipate doubling that number this year. I view my handbook reviews as “an art and a science” – there are logical and legal updates necessary for all handbooks but there is also the nuance of writing a handbook that (done right) can promote a positive workplace culture (which is essential today for organizations wanting to create a more engaged workforce). I believe every word matters and will fine tooth comb policy language to make sure it strikes the right balance – somewhere between formal and informal.



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Consider these examples of policy language. What would you rather read and how does each statement make you feel? When employees are trusted to do the right thing, I find that they generally live up to that expectation.

Policy Language Example #1: All employees are strictly prohibited from engaging in conduct that is considered an egregious and severe violation of company policy. Although the company believes in a progressive disciplinary approach, it retains full and sole discretion to decide the means and method of disciplinary action and can bypass verbal and written warnings, going straight to suspension or immediate termination at any time and for any reason. Any and all behavior deemed inappropriate or unprofessional will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The employee will be required to leave the premises immediately upon notification.

Policy Language Example #2: We trust that our employees will conduct themselves in a professional and honest manner. We believe our employees take pride in their work and hold themselves accountable to high standards of performance. At times, we may have to counsel or coach employees to help them improve. In certain situations, employment separation may be warranted, and we will do our best to ensure a smooth transition.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Your employee handbook will be the single most important document employees receive. More and more candidates are also asking to peruse the handbook prior to accepting a job to get a feel for what the company stands for and how they communicate expectations. Don't underestimate the power of the handbook as a retention and recruitment tool... and make sure it's written carefully and thoughtfully!

Speaking of recruiting challenges, I have one amazing expert and one incredible event to "spotlight" in this month's newsletter. First, please meet Blake Babcock, Director of Client Engagement for Staffing Solutions Enterprise (SSE). He is an incredible resource in the recruiting space and can assist any organization with their most difficult searches. Second, I will be sharing the stage with Brian Alquist, 1 Direction Strategy Business Coach, on February 25th as we discuss how an organization can improve their own internal hiring process. Specifically, I will be discussing best practices and legal compliance issues when recruiting and interviewing candidates. We invite you to register by clicking the link below.

SPOTLIGHT ON BLAKE BABCOCK



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Blake is the Director of Client Engagement and responsible for SSE's sales and marketing efforts. Blake is approaching 3 years with SSE and 14 years in the industry. SSE has an experienced team of staffing professionals and broad in-depth industry knowledge, which allows them to partner seamlessly with organizations to meet their specific goals and objectives. They offer clients the best, customized solutions while simultaneously driving down total operating cost.

SSE acts as an extension of a company's internal recruitment team, tailoring the screening and selection process to meet specific needs. You can elect to outsource the entire process to SSE from initial posting and sourcing through offer and onboarding or select certain portions of the process to outsource. All of their services are provided in a positive, professional atmosphere with a consistent high-level commitment to the individual client and job seeker goals.

If you are looking to fill positions in HR, engineering, production supervisors, accounting, administration (and many others), contact Blake at **440.461.1652** or **bbabcock@staffsol.com**. He will help you through every step of the process!

GETTING PEOPLE INTO THE RIGHT SEATS

A guide for recruiting in 2022



Brian Alquist
Certified Business Coach
1Direction Strategy

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Stella Skaljac, Esq.
SHRM-SCP
imagine HR



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- Date:** Friday, February 25, 2022
- Time:** 12:45pm - 1:00pm Networking
(light snack included)
1:00pm - 2:30pm Workshop
- Theme:** PROCESSES FOR RECRUITING
THE RIGHT PEOPLE
- Location:** Freedom Square II Building
6000 Freedom Square Drive
Independence
Access the Amphitheater Room
via the Ground Floor
- Investment:** \$35 per person - General Admission
\$0 per person - Select clients of 1DS,
imagine HR, & ZSA
- Other:** Participants will receive (1) free on-line
assessment for a future recruitment
initiative, compliments of 1Direction
Strategy.

According to XpertHR's annual survey, **recruiting** is HR professionals' top concern for the coming year. Of the 563 U.S. employers responding to the survey; 48% of which anticipated the need to increase their workforce in the coming year; a strong majority 66 percent said recruiting and hiring would be either "somewhat" or "very" challenging for them.

Many companies have been challenged during the pandemic to attract and retain talent. Not surprisingly, smaller companies have had the most difficulty. They simply don't have the resources and, in many cases, the bench strength, tools, or business experience that larger organizations have. Moreover, many small businesses are struggling not only with finding great candidates, but also with thinking strategically about their overall talent strategy.

Join presenters, **Brian Alquist** and **Stella Skaljac**, for an overview of critical recruitment, considerations, processes, do's and don'ts, and tools that will enhance your ability to hire top talent in 2022. **Advanced Registration is Required.**

Advanced registration required

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)