



YOUR STAFF HANDBOOK

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At Capworth Advisory we can advise business owners in the Kent area on many of the issues you face. Here are some pointers for what should be in your staff handbook...

Lengthy employment contracts, containing a huge amount of detailed information about terms and conditions, entitlements and procedures, are increasingly being replaced by short specific contracts and staff handbooks containing all the details of the matters applying to the whole workforce.

This simplified arrangement can be to the advantage of both employer and employee - here, we look at the reasons for preparing an employee handbook, and some of the things you should put in it.

Why should I have one?

A handbook is an effective way of communicating information about your company. It is good practice to be able to offer new staff a well written, comprehensive guide to your company's rules, procedures and employment policies. Not only does this promote good staff relations but it can also act as a training aid and save management time, because employees know where to look for relevant information rather than having to ask.

You can also use the handbook to fulfill your obligation to supply written information about basic terms and conditions of employment, although if you do this, it is essential to make clear which parts of the handbook are contractual. If items contained in the handbook form part of a contract of employment, reference to the handbook should be made in the statement signed by the employee.

What should be in it?

A good staff handbook might contain the following elements:

Company information

This might include an explanation of the nature of the business, its objectives and history. You could also add a welcoming note to new staff from the Managing Director.

Terms and conditions of employment

Include information about salaries, hours of work, overtime, holidays, sickness, company cars, fringe benefits, parental leave and pension plans.

Disciplinary procedures

Explain the company's policies on time keeping, dress, internet use, smoking, discrimination and so on. Describe procedures for discipline and for employee grievances.

General and specific company policies

As well as explaining your stance on general issues such as health and safety, data protection and training opportunities, include a guide to your specific do's and don'ts in areas like parking and employee's personal use of company equipment.

Tips

Make sure you update the handbook to keep abreast of changes in the law. Rather than having an expensive, glossy brochure it is sensible to present the information in loose-leaf form so that only the relevant pages need to be changed, or even to keep the handbook up to date on your company intranet.

It is important to get good advice when it comes to contractual issues. Ensure that your actual procedures are the same as those stated in the handbook.

Try to involve your staff in the production process. Is the information presented in a clear and friendly tone? Are there follow up questions they would wish to ask? If so, include the answers in the handbook.

If you are in the Kent area and are looking for support and advice from a team of professional accountants and business advisers, contact Capworth Advisory