

TOP SEVEN TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

As the saying often goes, the number one asset of any business is its employees. Having a strong, healthy business means having a competent and happy workforce. Here are seven tips for you to create a positive, compliant workplace for your employees, which in turn will help your business thrive:

1. Have a current employee handbook and use it.

An employee handbook sets forth the employer's workplace policies and rules of conduct. Topics covered in a handbook typically include policies prohibiting discrimination, harassment and retaliation; vacation/holiday/sick time; leave; overtime; travel; training; social media; and many others. Laws applicable to employers vary widely depending on the employer's size and location (city and state), so employers are strongly encouraged to work with an employment lawyer in developing a legally compliant employee handbook tailored for their business. Once the handbook is created, employers should use it consistently and make sure employees have read it.

2. Run a fair, thorough and objective hiring process.

Spend the time and effort to recruit and hire the most qualified candidates from the outset. Hiring decisions should be based on objective job requirements (which should be clearly described in the job posting) and the candidate's objective qualifications, which may include skills, educational background, training, and work experience. Conduct interviews and ask questions designed to reveal the employee's qualifications and ability to succeed in the job. Request and check candidate references.

3. Set your business up for success by giving your employees the tools they need.

Employers can set themselves up for success by training their employees and making sure employees have the skills and resources they need to support your business. Take the time to provide the training employees need to do their jobs well and meet your expectations. Because industry standards change over time, employers should be willing to provide ongoing training, reference materials or other learning resources to employees so they can stay current with industry standards to better serve your business and customers.

4. Manage job performance.

Failing to manage job performance is a common mistake that employers make. Supervisors and managers should be trained to coach employees about job expectations and job performance, to address performance deficiencies and issue discipline with the intent to correct behavior, and to complete regular performance evaluations. This ensures employees are provided timely feedback about their performance and given the opportunity to improve. Delaying or failing to manage job performance can create serious problems for employers.

5. Take employee complaints seriously.

An effective employee handbook should set forth the employer's complaint procedure. When an employee makes a complaint, the employer should take the complaint seriously, determine the appropriate follow-up action, and follow-through with that action. Some complaints might require investigation, which can be done either by an experienced human resources professional or a professional investigator. Following the completion of an investigation, take timely and appropriate

measures to resolve the issue raised in the complaint. Mitigate the risk of retaliation by consulting with an employment lawyer.

6. Pay your employees for all wages owed, on time.

Wages must be paid timely, subject to lawful deductions, and pursuant to applicable federal, state and local laws. Make sure paychecks are accurate and issued timely to your employees. For employees that are subject to minimum wage and overtime pay protections, make sure those employees are paid the appropriate pay for all hours worked. Maintain and enforce policies about work schedules and overtime. Don't allow your employees to work "off the clock."

If your business is located in the City of Seattle, the following website offers some useful employment-related information regarding minimum wage, scheduling and other topics:

<https://www.seattle.gov/laborstandards>

7. Manage and retain your employment-related records.

Personnel files may include an employee's qualifications, job description, performance evaluations, completed trainings, letters of commendation, letters of reprimand, and other employment records required for legal purposes. Medical information should be retained separately. Employers are required to maintain certain employment-related records for various periods of time depending on the nature of the information. Consult an employment lawyer to ensure your records practices comply with applicable law.

Rachel Seals is a labor and employment attorney in Seattle, Washington. To find an employment lawyer who can answer your employment-related questions, please contact the Korean American Bar Association of Washington at kabawaboard@gmail.com.