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How to Optimize Your New Hire Handbook

Having an effective and comprehensive employee handbook can be a great way to convey company policies and also reinforce confidence among new hires about why they joined your company. Creating this handbook, though, requires a thorough look at company procedures, messaging guidelines, and culture.

In the coming paragraphs, we'll outline how you can make your employee handbook both helpful to new employees and also compliant with any potential legal guidelines.

Employee Handbook Format

Understanding that everyone retains information differently, consider the various formats that your employee handbook should be. While a paper copy will likely be included in all new hire packets, having a downloadable digital version is also a good idea.

You can also display core ideas from your handbook, like company values or the mission statement in attractive ways around your workspace. Frame and hang them like a picture or paint them on a prominent wall, for example. And be sure to highlight key details from the handbook in your onboarding presentations.

✔ Company History

It's important to start employee handbooks with soft skills, core values, and the things that emphasize that the people are what makes the company special.

Sharing the history of how your company came to be where it is can provide valuable insight to new hires. By outlining things like why the company was created, how it has evolved over time, or the gaps that your product or service fills, you can begin to paint a more holistic picture of the business and growth, both past and future.

Also, include your company's mission. Having a succinct, high-level explanation of what the company's ultimate goal is can help new hires understand what they're working toward.

✔ Company Culture

For many new hires, the working environment is just as important as the product or service your company provides. Use this as an opportunity to highlight unique perks and specific reasons people enjoy coming to work everyday.

You can also include details about your logo, such as what it represents, how it came about and the significance of certain colors or symbols.

Also, be sure to mention dress code in your employee handbook. Do you have a casual dress code or just casual Fridays? Suit-and-tie or short sleeves preferred New hires will want to know what is acceptable and what is expected in the workplace so they won't show up over or under-dressed in the future.

Point out a few ways that employees have fun at work. This sheds light on the things that other employees value and what they find entertaining. It's a chance to further strengthen your new hires' sense of belonging by identifying common interests and activities outside of their job description. Examples of things to include in this section are:

- **Annual company retreats**
- **Clubs for games, activities like hiking, or popular tv show watch parties**
- **Happy hours**
- **Company-sponsored discounts on gym memberships or health and wellness apps**

✔ Where Can People Find You?

Inform new hires of how they can find your company, both physically and online. Provide maps to your current location and also highlight where you have other offices. Chances are that new hires have already found your website, but share it anyway along with any other subsidiary or internal sites.

✔ What's Your Product?

Now you get into your company's products whether they are actual products, an innovative platform or a service that you provide. Talk about how your products set you apart from competitors and leave new hires with a witty catchphrase that they can use to easily explain your product offerings to others. This is especially useful initially. As these employees work with you and learn more about the details, then, this catchphrase may be phased out of their vocabulary and replaced with specifics.

Don't be ashamed to show off. If your company has received any awards, or has powerful testimonials from notable clients, include those in the employee handbook. New hires are encouraged knowing that they accepted an offer from the right company, and accolades like these strengthen those beliefs.

✔ Explain Your HR Procedures

Make sure that new employees understand some of the common HR rules and procedures. List company holidays and standard operation hours, if they apply. Address topics like how paid time off (PTO) is accrued, how to make a PTO request and where employees can go to track requests. The same goes for volunteer time off (VTO) and sick days. Learn how Workful makes it easy for employees and employers to track time off.

You may also consider including details about other relevant HR topics like complaint procedures, expense reimbursements, payment schedules or working from home. The more you can include, the better, since you never know what questions people could have down the line. Make sure to include a way for employees to contact HR for more questions or clarification on any topics.

✔ Communication Guidelines

With every new hire, you gain another representative for your company or cause. That's why it's important to give them guidelines for speaking about your business, whether that be on social media, in emails to prospects or at a trade show booth. In your employee handbook, talk about how you market yourself in terms of voice and tone, but also where to direct people to your online presence, including your website and social media handles. If you have certain hashtags that you use, include these in the handbook as well.

Your company may also have specific lingo that works to further extend your brand. Unique terms for employees, turning your company name into a verb or having a special way of answering the phone can help identify your employees, increasing your reach into the community. Make sure all new hires know this.

CONCLUSION

Each company is different, and so every company's handbook should be different. Regardless, this outline is a great place to start in terms of formatting your guide and making sure that all of the relevant information is included. If you want to speak with an HR professional about your handbook, and possibly have them review it for effectiveness, reach out to Workful and we'll connect you with one of our experts!

✔ Summary

Format:
- Printed copy of employee handbook
- Digital copy of employee handbook
- Include in new hire presentation

Company History
- Core Values
- Mission Statement
- Why/how the company was created
- Company growth, past and future

Company Culture
- What is the current climate?
- What does your logo mean?
- Dress code
- How do employees enjoy themselves?

Where to find you?
- Map of current location
- List of other company offices
- Company website, including internal sites

Product Offerings
- List of products or services
- What differentiates your products from competitors?
- HIghlight awards and accolades
- Customer testimonials

HR Policies and Procedures
- Operating hours and company holidays
- PTO, VTO and sick days
- Payment schedules and benefits
- How to reach HR

Communication Guidelines
- Company voice and tone
- Social Media handles and hashtags
- Unique company lingo