



**TRELLIS**

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## Is it time for an Employee Handbook Refresh?

***DISCLAIMER: This outline is a general guide. Be sure to contact an attorney if you have questions or specific issues that need to be addressed.***

As time goes by, the way you operate your business may look a little different from when you first got started. Maybe you've expanded your team beyond yourself or expanded the roles of your employees and have additional offerings for them, such as benefits or paid leave. Perhaps you're able to rely on them for more and it's helped you grow, but you want to make sure there are clear policies surrounding the work they do that you've come to trust. It's always a good idea to have an employee handbook – whether you have one or one hundred employees – because the employee handbook can communicate to your team what is expected of them (proactively) and clearly outline specific policies and procedures for addressing concerns and resolving issues.

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(Needless to say, you cannot update your employee handbook if you don't have one. Creating an employee handbook is an important tool that can outline what is expected of your employees on their shifts and establish workplace guidelines and expectations to protect your company and its employees, which helps everyone succeed. Important policies to have in your handbook include termination procedures, payroll procedures, who is entitled to benefits, an attendance policy, time off and paid time off policies, among others. [Read our blog post](#) that goes into more detail about what an employee handbook should include and when to have one.)

Below are a few questions to ask yourself if you're working to update your *current* employee handbook:

1. **Does your current handbook accurately reflect how you do business?** It's normal for processes, procedures, and policies to change as businesses grow and issues come and go. But you want to make sure your employees are aware of these changes. Make sure to review your employee handbook every now and then to make sure it accurately reflects how you run the business and what is expected of employees. This can help avoid confusion in onboarding new employees and set the record straight around what's expected of current ones.

Below are just a few examples of questions you can ask about updates/changes and how they're reflected in your employee handbook:

- Have you instated new or updated policies or disciplinary procedures since first issuing your employee handbook?
  - Have you had a change in part-time vs. full-time employee roles, and are there items in your employee handbook that could better describe these differences or appropriately distinguish between the two?
  - Have you moved offices or locations that might bring on additional policies or even changes in terminology?
  - Is there a change in the procedure for misconduct or for bringing issues forward?
  - Do you have different attendance, timekeeping or scheduling requirements?
  - Have you gone to a different model surrounding hybrid or remote work where you want to account for tasks completed at home and what is expected of employees who are able to work at home?
  - Have you had any issues with dress code you want to account for? Perhaps other policies surrounding professionalism?
  - Have you updated anything surrounding your benefits structure? Maybe you're providing more paid time off, perhaps you've brought in new insurance offerings such as health care, life insurance, or short-term disability.
  - Are there any additional incentive programs you have added such as additional earned paid time off or reward incentives? (One note, if you've created a paid bonus structure/scheme, we recommend working with an attorney to make sure these are not tied to things like company profits without meeting the appropriate legal requirements.)
  - And so much more. There are so many areas that can change in your business, and you want everyone to be on the same page when it comes to these policies.
2. **Have there been any updates in the law you need to account for that you want to make sure your policies aren't in violation of?** For example, federal, state, and local authorities update employment laws on a regular basis surrounding paid leave/time-off requirements, tipped wage laws, and more. At minimum, you need to make sure you are providing benefits required by law to employees (you can often provide *more* benefits than required by law just not less.) For example, Pennsylvania [updated legal requirements](#) surrounding pay for tipped wages in 2022 (see [our infographic](#)), and Allegheny County, PA updated rules for providing paid sick time to employees ([see our infographic](#)), and Pittsburgh Paid Sick Leave (see our [blog post](#) from when the law first went into effect.
3. **What's missing?** Perhaps you hadn't originally included certain policies or details because you weren't quite sure how they would work until you ran the business for a while and understood the best courses of action. Maybe you've developed your mission and want to include this. Or, perhaps you want to add more around workplace safety or a misconduct procedure. There are many communications from employee cell phone use to expectations surrounding interactions with customers that the employee handbook can be a useful tool for putting your employees on notice about. Work with an

attorney to help you understand what is missing from yours, what could be made stronger, and what your obligations are under the law.

4. Remember, if you make changes, you need to let your employees know.

It's likely they aren't checking their employee handbook for updates on a regular basis, so provide them with the update, describe what the updates or new details are, and ask them to provide an affirmative acknowledgment of their receipt of the change, such as their signature on the new version. Also make sure the handbook states you can provide updates and policy changes!

**Other Employment Resources & Blogs:**

- [Deploy the Employees: Employment Basics for New Employees](#)
- [Taking the Nerves Out of NDAs and Non-Competes for Employees](#)
- [Hiring Independent Contractors Resource](#)
- Employee Onboarding Resource: [All On-Board! Employer To-Dos for Growing Your Team](#)