

Why Employee Policy Documentation is Important to Companies of any Size.

Legally, all UK employers (even those with just a single employee) are required to have certain employment policies in place. These include a written disciplinary procedure, written grievance procedure and written particulars of employment (i.e. a contract of employment).

The content of these policies and documents needs to be both legally accurate and easy to understand. Both employees and managers within a business must be able to work with the procedures; otherwise they have very little value to a business!

Companies will typically have a range of HR policies and procedures which cover a wide variety of issues. However these policies should take the form more of a statement which provides a course of action in response to a particular issue and also aims to minimise risk to both employees and the business.

Ensuring that your Company policies and procedures are up to date will support and give clarity to both the employee and the business by explaining how an issue will be dealt with and by whom, in some cases it may even specify a time frame within which any action needs to be taken.

Policies and procedures which are implemented correctly ensure that employees understand their responsibilities and how they should deal with various situations. They also provide a framework to help managers resolve problems fairly and consistently and most importantly by working in line with employment law.

It is also important that policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by someone who understands employment law. If policy and procedural documentation hasn't been updated for some time, it may be appropriate to consider a professional review or health check to ensure the policies are still in line with the law and also to ensure they are still providing the best framework of guidance for employees and managers. A significant level of skill is required to write the necessary documentation (and keep it up to date with current legislation and best practice).

A well written set of policies and procedures may contain more than the minimum legal requirements. They should include appropriate advice and guidance for both managers and employees. Employment law can be complex and difficult to understand therefore effective guidance can help make difficult situations a lot easier to manage in the long run.

If it is decided within a business a review of policies and procedures might be appropriate, some thought needs to be given as to how this will be communicated to employees. In general, it is helpful to give one month's notice of any policy change.

Effective policies and procedures are important for both legal and practical reasons. Introducing policies can be a complex but certainly a beneficial process to all stakeholders with the business.

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