

Five Human Resources Trends

Here's a look at some best practices.

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1. Recruiting

Recruiting provides your first interaction with and your first impression of your future employees. It is your chance to highlight your organization's culture and stress the benefits of working for your organization, in addition to learning about the candidate. You need to remain compliant throughout the process to avoid litigation or hefty fines. Creating a strong recruiting strategy will help you compete for the best talent while remaining compliant.

Create a recruiting process with proper documentation.

Ensure all of your internal human resources (HR) staff and hiring managers are educated on your recruiting processes. Collect and keep appropriate documentation, including the completed application, an interview evaluation form from each interviewer, and a clean

copy of the candidate's resume. Using these documents consistently while evaluating candidates will guarantee you are asking each of the applicants

the same questions and evaluating them all in the same way. Although your interview evaluation forms may contain different questions depending on the position, the type of information obtained from each candidate will remain consistent.

Store documentation for at least two years.

Keep copies of the documentation for a minimum of one year after a no-hire decision; or if hired, course of employment plus one year after ter-

mination. Be aware that some states may have stricter record-keeping laws than two years or other recommendations, and be sure you follow your state's guidelines. Keeping this documentation will prove helpful should you ever encounter litigation regarding discriminatory hiring practice claims. This may also prove helpful to succession planning when you speak with more than one qualified candidate. Grow your candidate database and keep in touch with those who may be a good fit for your organization down the road.

Eliminate salary history questions.

Individuals performing the same job functions should be compensated in the same manner. The gender wage gap, more specifically, has been a hot topic of discussion, but wage gaps can be found among any employees performing the same job functions. When you

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ask for salary history on a job application or in an interview, it can be tempting to offer a candidate less compensation if he or she has a history of lower compensation. This puts the individual in a holding pattern of lower compensation and contributes to wage gap issues.

Many states are now recognizing the part salary history plays in the wage gap issue and have made the question illegal on applications. It may still be pertinent to understand if a candidate's salary requirements even fit the range for your position in order to avoid wasting anyone's time. Instead of asking about salary history, though, focus on questions that will help you determine the level of education or experience the candidate brings to the position. You may also ask candidates about their salary expectations. Eliminating salary history from your application, interview process, and background checks will assist with compliance and fair pay.

2. Harassment and Discrimination

There has been an increase in high-profile sexual harassment cases in the media over the past year. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 85% of women claim they have been sexually harassed at work.¹ Victims began the #metoo movement in late 2017, a hashtag used on social media to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace. Attention to this issue has forced business owners and lawmakers to ask themselves what businesses can do to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Develop a zero-tolerance policy.

The first step is to develop an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy. Keep it with all of your other policies in your employee handbook. After an employee receives the handbook, remember to obtain a signed receipt acknowledging the employee has received, read, and understood the content within it.

Identify a reporting process.

Another best practice is to offer multiple people to whom employees can report any harassment or discrimination incidents. This will avoid any obstacles should a complaint be made about the reporting contact themselves. You may wish to consider appointing a male and a female reporting contact, because employees may feel more comfortable approaching one or the other depending on the nature of the incident.

Conduct training regularly.

Once you've established a policy

of laws or different policies for each location. Also, understand what information you need to track with these leave benefits.

Train all managers.

Managers need to know and understand employees' rights. They also need to be trained on how to handle, track, document, manage, and schedule each of the leave requests you provide.

Inform your employees of their rights.

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and a process for reporting, conduct harassment training on a regular basis for all employees. Ninety-four percent of surveyed HR professionals told the Society of Human Resource Management that their organizations have anti-harassment policies. However, 22% of non-management employees did not know for sure that these policies even existed.² It is not enough to simply have the policies. Education is key. While we recommend training sessions every two years, some state laws are more stringent. Know the laws that apply to your business and create a training program for compliance.

3. Employee Leave

Many states and municipalities are adopting various employee leave laws. This will add another administrative burden for employers and may present a challenge for employers with employees in multiple locations with differing laws.

Understand local laws and determine how your business will comply.

Take a look at all of the laws regarding sick leave, family leave, military leave, bereavement leave, blood donor leave, domestic violence leave, emergency responder leave, and school activities leave. If you employ staff in multiple locations, you need to decide whether you will create one policy that adheres to the most strin-

Placing this information in an employee handbook where it is easily accessible allows employees to refer to it at any time. Letting employees know about their rights also shows you care about them as individuals and want them to be able to take advantage of their benefits as the need arises. It shows that you are concerned not only about your business, but also about the employees who help you run that business.

4. Workplace Violence

Nearly two million American workers report having been the victims of workplace violence each year, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.³ Common forms of workplace violence, such as threats, verbal abuse, harassment, or intimidation, many of which may go unreported, need to be addressed within your policy and training strategies.

Develop a clear zero-tolerance harassment and workplace violence policy.

State the policy clearly and specifically in your employee handbook. Remember that workplace violence can go beyond worksite employees to include patients, clients, visitors, or contractors. Your policy language should include anyone who may come in contact with your employees on the job.

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Include what an employee should do if he or she is the victim or has observed an act of violence in the workplace, and what the consequences of such acts will be.

do about known harassment and ensure management knows how to handle any incidents reported or observed. Include tips in your training sessions. For example, a manager or HR staff member who needs to terminate an individual or deliver any

policy lines, encourage meetings between them and their manager and an HR professional. Address the behavior and give the opportunity, tools, and resources to correct their behavior before it turns into an act of violence.

It is every employee's right to have a safe work environment. The best employers will proactively put programs in place to minimize or alleviate workplace violence for a more productive and positive workforce.

Training management and key personnel is vital to remaining compliant in a wide range of areas.

Enforce the policy regularly and consistently.

Inconsistencies lead to confusion among employees and leave employers vulnerable to lawsuits. Make sure that all managers are handling situations in a consistent manner.

Offer regular anti-harassment and violence training sessions to your employees.

Reiterate what employees should

message that may cause an employee to "lose it" should always physically position themselves in the room near an exit. It is easy to get trapped inside a room with a violent person when there are obstacles, including a person, between you and the exit.

Keep a pulse on relationships within the workplace.

When employees seem to be hostile or dangerously close to crossing

5. Drug-Free Workplace

Have you ever suspected an employee was under the influence of drugs or alcohol? Did you turn your head, questioning your judgment? Or perhaps you were hesitant to handle the matter on your own?

According to the American Council for Drug Education, drug and alcohol abusers are 10 times more likely to miss work, 3.6 times more likely to be involved in on-the-job

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accidents, 5 times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim, 33% less productive, and responsible for healthcare costs that are three times as high.⁴ These staggering statistics force organizations everywhere to consider the drug and alcohol policies they have in place and the use of "reasonable suspicion" drug testing.

Include a checklist of signs of drug and alcohol use in your policy.

Actions such as unsteady walking, unusual speech patterns, erratic behavior, hyperactivity, or drowsiness, and observed signs such as dilated pupils or a strong alcohol odor on the breath may indicate an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Including this in your policy will help your managers determine when they should conduct "reasonable suspicion" drug testing without risking accusations of discrimination.

Train your managers to identify these signs.

You're starting to see a pattern here! Training management and key personnel is vital to remaining compliant in a wide range of areas. Drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace is no exception. Create a training program for all managers so they know your policies and how to handle incidents.

Institute "reasonable suspicion" drug testing.

Reasonable suspicion drug testing is done when an employer has reason to believe that an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol while conducting work. Recognizing the signs of drug and alcohol abuse will make an uncomfortable situation smoother while protecting your employees' health and safety, as well as your practice's bottom line. **PM**

References

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² SHRM Research Finds Some Employees Unaware of Company Sexual Harassment Policies. SHRM.org, <https://www.shrm.org/about-shrm/press-room/press-releases/pages/sexual-harassment-survey.aspx>.

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