

Essential Sections of an Employee Handbook

Section 1: Welcome And Company Overview

Welcome to AC Software

We are excited to welcome you as a valued member of the AC Software team. You are now part of a company that strives for excellence, innovation, and a culture of respect. Our success is built on the dedication and contributions of our employees, and we look forward to the unique skills, energy, and ideas you will bring to our organization.

This handbook is designed to guide you through our policies, procedures, and benefits, while also giving you a clear understanding of who we are as a company and what we stand for. We encourage you to read it carefully and refer to it whenever you have questions about your role or the workplace.

Our Mission

At AC Software, our mission is to **deliver high-quality products and services that improve lives and create long-term value for our customers, employees, and communities**. We achieve this by fostering innovation, promoting collaboration, and holding ourselves to the highest standards of integrity and accountability.

Our Vision

We aspire to be recognized as an **industry leader and employer of choice**, known for:

- Creating innovative solutions that set new standards.
- Empowering employees with opportunities for growth and development.
- Building a culture where teamwork, respect, and transparency thrive.
- Contributing positively to the communities where we live and work.

Our Core Values

Our values guide our decisions, actions, and relationships every day:

1. **Integrity** – We do the right thing, even when it's difficult.
2. **Respect** – We value diverse perspectives and treat everyone with fairness and dignity.
3. **Innovation** – We embrace creativity and encourage new ideas to drive progress.
4. **Collaboration** – We succeed together, not as individuals.
5. **Excellence** – We hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of quality and performance.

A Note from Leadership

Dear Team,

On behalf of the leadership team, we want to extend a warm welcome to you. At AC Software, we believe our employees are the foundation of our success. Your talents and dedication will help us continue to innovate and provide exceptional service to our customers.

We are committed to supporting your professional growth, ensuring your well-being, and fostering an environment where every voice is heard. This handbook will serve as your roadmap to understanding not only our policies but also the culture that makes our company unique.

We look forward to the journey ahead and are excited to see the positive impact you will make here.

Sincerely,
Andi Castillo-Mauricio
CEO, AC Software

Our History

Founded in **2000**, AC Software began as a small startup with a simple idea: to make everyday technology more accessible to people everywhere. Over the years, we've grown into a respected leader in our industry, serving customers across world.

Despite our growth, we've never lost sight of the principles that brought us here: innovation, customer focus, and respect for our people. We continue to adapt, evolve, and push boundaries, ensuring that we stay ahead in a rapidly changing marketplace.

Our Culture

Culture is at the heart of everything we do. We believe that **a strong workplace culture drives both employee satisfaction and business success**. At AC Software, you'll find:

- A collaborative environment where teamwork and open communication are encouraged.
- A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Recognition and celebration of employee achievements.
- Support for professional development, continuous learning, and career advancement.

We want every employee to feel empowered, supported, and motivated to do their best work.

Section 2: Employment Basics

Employment Classifications

AC Software classifies employees into specific categories to ensure compliance with federal and state laws, as well as to determine eligibility for benefits and overtime pay. These classifications also help employees understand their status within the organization.

- **Full-Time Employees**
Employees regularly scheduled to work **at least 40 hours per week**. Full-time employees are generally eligible for the full range of company benefits, including health insurance, retirement contributions, paid time off, and professional development stipends.
- **Part-Time Employees**
Employees regularly scheduled to work **fewer than 30 hours per week**. Part-time employees may be eligible for limited benefits, such as prorated paid time off or participation in wellness programs, but they are not typically eligible for medical or retirement benefits.
- **Temporary Employees**
Employees hired for a **specific project or defined time period** (such as 3–6 months). Temporary employees are not eligible for benefits unless required by law.
- **Interns/Apprentices**
AC Software offers internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students or early-career professionals. These positions are intended to provide practical learning experiences and are typically limited to a 3–12 month period.
- **Exempt Employees**
Employees classified as **exempt** under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). These employees are **salaried** and are **not eligible for overtime pay**. They are expected to

fulfill the responsibilities of their role regardless of hours worked. Exempt employees typically include managers, supervisors, software engineers, and other professional or executive-level positions.

- **Non-Exempt Employees**

Employees classified as **non-exempt** under the FLSA. These employees are **hourly** and are eligible for overtime pay at one and one-half times their regular hourly rate for any hours worked beyond 40 in a workweek. Non-exempt positions may include administrative support staff, IT support roles, and junior-level roles with defined hourly schedules.

At-Will Employment Statement

Employment with AC Software is considered **at-will** unless otherwise stated in a written agreement signed by both the employee and the Chief Executive Officer.

This means that either the employee or AC Software may terminate the employment relationship **at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice**, subject to applicable local, state, and federal laws.

At-will employment cannot be altered by any verbal agreements, past practices, or informal discussions. Any modifications must be documented in writing and signed by both the employee and an authorized company officer.

Probationary Periods

To ensure the right fit between employees and AC Software, all newly hired employees are subject to a **90-day probationary period** beginning on their first day of employment.

During this time:

- Employees will receive additional support, training, and performance evaluations.
- Supervisors will provide feedback on progress and expectations.
- Employment may be terminated by either party at any time if performance, conduct, or cultural fit is not satisfactory.

Successful completion of the probationary period does not alter the **at-will employment status**, but it does confirm the employee as a regular member of the AC Software team, with continued eligibility for applicable benefits and opportunities for advancement.

Section 3: Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) & Anti-Discrimination

Non-Discrimination Statement

AC Software is firmly committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants. Employment decisions are based on merit, qualifications, performance, and business needs, without regard to:

- Race, color, or ethnicity
- Religion or creed
- National origin or ancestry
- Sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation
- Age
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Marital status or family status
- Pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions
- Military or veteran status
- Genetic information
- Any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law

We believe a diverse and inclusive workforce is critical to innovation and success. Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.

Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy

AC Software strives to provide a workplace free of harassment, bullying, and intimidation. All employees are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect.

Harassment Defined

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome conduct, comments, jokes, or gestures based on protected characteristics.
- Offensive images, posters, or digital content.
- Verbal abuse, ridicule, or slurs.
- Physical intimidation, unwanted touching, or threats.

Sexual Harassment specifically includes:

- Unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature.
Quid pro quo harassment (e.g., promotions or benefits conditioned on sexual favors).
Creating a hostile work environment through sexual jokes, comments, or materials.

Bullying Defined

Bullying may include repeated mistreatment through:

- Verbal abuse or yelling.
- Spreading rumors or gossip.
- Deliberate exclusion from work activities.
- Sabotaging another employee's work.

Reporting and Resolution

- Employees who experience or witness harassment or bullying should immediately report it to their supervisor, the Human Resources (HR) department, or via the anonymous ethics hotline.
 - All complaints will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and resolved fairly.
 - Retaliation against individuals who report harassment or participate in an investigation is strictly prohibited.
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Accommodation Policies

AC Software complies with all applicable laws regarding accommodations for employees with disabilities, religious practices, or pregnancy-related needs.

- **Disability Accommodations**
Employees with physical or mental disabilities may request reasonable accommodations that allow them to perform essential job functions. Examples include modified equipment, schedule adjustments, or accessible workspace modifications.
- **Religious Accommodations**
Employees may request accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs or practices. Examples include flexible scheduling for religious holidays, dress code modifications, or prayer breaks.
- **Pregnancy & Related Conditions**
Pregnant employees and those recovering from childbirth or dealing with related medical conditions are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Examples include additional breaks, modified work duties, or remote work options.

How to Request an Accommodation:

- Submit a written request to the HR department.
 - HR will engage in an interactive process with the employee to determine reasonable accommodations that do not impose undue hardship on the company.
 - All requests and medical information will be kept confidential in accordance with applicable law.
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Section 4: Code of Conduct

Professionalism & Behavior Expectations

At AC Software, we are committed to maintaining a workplace built on mutual respect, accountability, and collaboration. Every employee is expected to act in a way that reflects positively on themselves and the company.

Employees are expected to:

- Treat colleagues, clients, and partners with courtesy and respect at all times.
- Communicate in a professional and constructive manner, whether in person, over email, or through collaboration tools.
- Be punctual and reliable in meeting work obligations, deadlines, and scheduled commitments.
- Uphold the highest standards of honesty and integrity in all interactions.
- Take ownership of their work and responsibilities.

Unprofessional behavior such as verbal abuse, intimidation, discrimination, or deliberate disruption of workplace activities will not be tolerated.

Dress Code

AC Software values a modern, comfortable workplace that balances professionalism with flexibility.

- **Office Employees (Onsite/Hybrid):**
Business casual attire is expected. Examples include slacks, khakis, blouses, polos, and sweaters. Jeans are acceptable if clean and without rips. Clothing that is offensive, overly revealing, or unsafe is not permitted.
- **Remote Employees:**
Remote employees may dress casually but should maintain professional appearance standards when participating in video meetings.
- **Client-Facing Roles:**
Employees meeting with clients, partners, or external stakeholders should wear business professional attire unless otherwise approved.
- **Casual Fridays & Events:**
AC Software observes “Casual Fridays” where employees may dress more comfortably. Company events may also allow casual dress as announced.

Conflicts of Interest

Employees must avoid any personal, financial, or professional activities that could conflict with the best interests of AC Software.

Examples of conflicts of interest include:

- Accepting gifts, favors, or payments from vendors or clients that could influence business decisions.
Holding financial interests in a competitor, supplier, or client without disclosure.
- Using insider knowledge for personal gain, including trading stocks or investments related to company business.
- Engaging in outside employment that interferes with AC Software duties.

Employees must disclose potential conflicts of interest to the HR department or their manager immediately. The company will work with the employee to assess and resolve the situation.

Use of Company Property

Company resources are provided to employees for business purposes. All employees are expected to treat these resources responsibly and with care.

Physical Property

- Office equipment, such as laptops, phones, and monitors, must be used for work-related activities.
- Employees are responsible for safeguarding company-issued devices.
- Any loss, theft, or damage must be reported immediately to IT or HR.

Digital Property

- Company email, messaging systems, and collaboration tools are intended for business use.
- Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work duties or violate company policy.
- Employees must not download, install, or use unauthorized software on company devices.
- Sharing confidential or proprietary information without authorization is prohibited.

Facilities

- Workspaces, meeting rooms, and break areas should be kept clean and orderly.
- Company badges and key cards must not be shared with unauthorized individuals.

Misuse of company property, including theft, vandalism, or inappropriate use of technology, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Section 5: Work Hours, Attendance & Remote Work Policy

Standard Work Hours

The standard workweek at AC Software is **40 hours**, typically Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (local time). Specific schedules may vary by department and role.

- Employees are expected to work their assigned hours consistently.
 - Flexible scheduling may be permitted with prior approval from a supervisor.
 - Hours may vary for employees working in client-facing or support roles to meet customer needs.
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Attendance & Punctuality

Regular and reliable attendance is essential to maintaining productivity and teamwork.

Employees are expected to:

- Arrive on time for scheduled work hours, meetings, and deadlines.
 - Notify their supervisor as soon as possible if they are unable to attend work due to illness, emergencies, or other reasons.
 - Record absences, sick time, and personal leave through the HR portal.
 - Avoid excessive unexcused absences or tardiness, which may lead to disciplinary action.
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Remote Work Policy

As a modern software company, AC Software supports flexible work arrangements, including hybrid and fully remote roles.

Eligibility

- Remote work eligibility depends on the role and must be approved by management.
- Employees must have a reliable internet connection and a secure home workspace.

Expectations for Remote Employees

- Be available online during core business hours (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. local time).
- Attend all scheduled video meetings with cameras on, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Remain responsive through company communication tools (Slack, email, project management platforms).
- Ensure company-issued equipment is used only by the employee and remains secure.

Equipment & Expenses

- AC Software will provide remote employees with a company laptop, monitor, and necessary peripherals.
 - The company may reimburse internet or home office expenses as outlined in the expense policy.
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Recording Time

- **Exempt Employees** are not required to track daily hours but must ensure job responsibilities are met.
 - **Non-Exempt Employees** must accurately record all hours worked in the timekeeping system, including overtime.
 - Unauthorized overtime is not permitted but will be compensated if worked.
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Overtime & Scheduling

- Overtime is paid to **non-exempt employees** at 1.5x the regular hourly rate for all hours worked over 40 in a week.
 - Overtime must be approved in advance by a manager.
 - Managers are responsible for fair scheduling and ensuring coverage while respecting employees' work-life balance.
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Absence & Leave Notifications

- Planned absences (e.g., vacation, personal leave) should be requested at least **two weeks in advance**.
 - Unexpected absences (e.g., illness, emergencies) must be reported as soon as possible, preferably before the start of the workday.
 - Failure to notify a supervisor for **three consecutive workdays** may be considered job abandonment.
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Section 6: Compensation & Payroll

Pay Schedule

Employees of AC Software are paid on a **bi-weekly basis**, every other Friday. Paychecks are issued through **direct deposit** to the employee's designated bank account.

- New hires must provide direct deposit information during onboarding.

- Pay stubs are available electronically through the payroll portal.
 - Any questions or discrepancies should be directed to the Payroll department immediately.
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Overtime Pay

- **Non-Exempt Employees:** Eligible for overtime pay at **1.5 times** their regular hourly rate for all hours worked beyond 40 in a workweek.
 - **Exempt Employees:** Salaried exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay. They are expected to manage their workload to meet job expectations.
 - **Approval Requirement:** All overtime must be pre-approved by a supervisor. Unauthorized overtime is not permitted.
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Deductions

AC Software makes payroll deductions as required by law and as authorized by employees. Common deductions include:

- Federal and state income taxes.
- Social Security and Medicare contributions.
- Voluntary deductions (e.g., health insurance premiums, retirement contributions, flexible spending accounts).
- Wage garnishments, if mandated by court order.

Employees may adjust voluntary deductions through the HR portal during open enrollment or after a qualifying life event.

Performance Reviews & Merit Increases

Performance reviews are conducted **annually**, typically in Q4. These reviews evaluate:

- Quality of work.
- Collaboration and teamwork.
- Initiative and innovation.
- Alignment with company values.

Based on performance evaluations, employees may be eligible for:

- **Merit-based salary increases.**
- **Performance bonuses**, tied to individual or company results.
- Opportunities for promotions and expanded responsibilities.

Supervisors will communicate performance goals and expectations at the start of each review cycle.

Bonuses & Incentives

AC Software may provide discretionary bonuses and incentives to recognize outstanding performance, innovation, or contributions to company success. These may include:

- Project completion bonuses.
- Innovation awards.
- Referral bonuses for successful hires.

Bonuses are not guaranteed and are awarded at management's discretion.

Pay Transparency & Equity

AC Software is committed to **fair and equitable compensation practices**. Salaries are determined based on:

- Role responsibilities.
- Market competitiveness.
- Employee skills and experience.
- Internal pay equity.

The company regularly reviews pay ranges to ensure fairness and compliance with applicable laws, including equal pay requirements.

Payroll Questions & Errors

Employees who believe there is an error in their paycheck (such as incorrect hours, missing overtime, or deduction errors) should notify Payroll immediately. AC Software will investigate promptly and make any necessary corrections in the next payroll cycle or sooner if required.

Section 7: Time Off & Leave Policies

Paid Time Off (PTO)

AC Software provides employees with Paid Time Off (PTO) to support rest, recreation, and personal needs.

- **Accrual:** Full-time employees accrue **15 days (120 hours)** of PTO per year, beginning on their first day of employment. PTO accrues monthly at a rate of 10 hours per month.
 - **Carryover:** Employees may carry over up to **5 unused days** into the following calendar year. Any additional unused PTO will be forfeited.
 - **Scheduling PTO:** PTO requests should be submitted via the HR portal at least **two weeks in advance**. Approval will be based on business needs and staffing requirements.
 - **Use of PTO:** PTO may be taken in full or half-day increments. PTO may not be used before it is accrued.
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Sick Leave

AC Software recognizes the importance of health and wellness.

- Employees receive **5 paid sick days per year** in addition to PTO.
 - Sick leave may be used for personal illness, injury, or medical appointments, or to care for an immediate family member.
 - Sick leave beyond 3 consecutive days may require a doctor's note.
 - Sick time does not roll over year to year.
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Holidays

The company observes the following **paid holidays** each year:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Employees required to work on a company holiday may receive compensatory time off or additional pay, depending on their classification.

Parental Leave

AC Software provides paid parental leave to support employees during significant family milestones.

- **Eligibility:** Available to all full-time employees after 12 months of service.
- **Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave:** Eligible employees receive **8 weeks of paid leave**.
- Leave must be taken within 12 months of the birth or adoption of a child.

- Additional unpaid leave may be available under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or state law.
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Bereavement Leave

Employees may take up to **3 paid days** of leave in the event of the death of an immediate family member (spouse, parent, child, sibling, or grandparent). Additional unpaid time may be requested with manager approval.

Jury Duty

Employees called for jury duty will be granted unpaid leave for the duration of service. Full-time employees may receive up to **5 days of paid jury duty leave** per year. Employees should provide a copy of the jury summons to HR as soon as possible.

Military Leave

AC Software complies with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Employees serving in the military are entitled to unpaid leave and job protection, with benefits continuation as required by law.

Leave of Absence (LOA)

Employees may request an unpaid leave of absence for personal, educational, or family reasons. Approval will be based on the circumstances and business needs. During an LOA, benefits may be continued at the employee's expense in accordance with COBRA or other applicable laws.

Section 8: Employee Benefits

AC Software is committed to supporting the health, financial security, and overall well-being of its employees. Eligible employees will have access to a wide range of benefits, many of which are subsidized or fully covered by the company.

Health, Dental, and Vision Insurance

- **Eligibility:** Full-time employees are eligible for medical, dental, and vision coverage beginning on the **first day of the month following 30 days of employment**.
 - **Medical Insurance:** Comprehensive plans are offered through a national provider, including options for PPO and HMO coverage. AC Software covers a significant portion of the premium, with employees contributing through payroll deductions.
 - **Dental Insurance:** Preventive services (cleanings, exams, X-rays) are fully covered. Major procedures (fillings, crowns, orthodontics) are partially covered.
 - **Vision Insurance:** Coverage includes annual eye exams, prescription lenses, and discounts on frames and contact lenses.
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Retirement Savings Plan (401k)

- AC Software offers a **401(k) retirement plan** to help employees prepare for long-term financial stability.
 - Employees may contribute a portion of their salary on a pre-tax or Roth (after-tax) basis.
 - The company provides a **matching contribution of 100% of the first 4%** of employee contributions.
 - Employees are fully vested in their own contributions immediately; employer contributions vest after 1 year of service.
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Life and Disability Insurance

- **Basic Life Insurance:** AC Software provides company-paid life insurance equal to one year's salary (up to \$150,000).
 - **Voluntary Life Insurance:** Employees may purchase additional coverage for themselves and dependents.
 - **Disability Insurance:** Short-term disability (STD) and long-term disability (LTD) plans are available, providing income replacement in the event of illness or injury.
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Wellness Program

- AC Software values employee health and offers a **wellness program** that includes:
 - Gym membership reimbursement up to \$40/month.
 - Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with counseling services.
 - Onsite or virtual wellness workshops (nutrition, stress management, financial literacy).
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Tuition Reimbursement

- Eligible employees may receive up to **\$3,000 per year** in tuition reimbursement for coursework or certifications related to their role.
 - Courses must be pre-approved by HR and completed with a passing grade.
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Professional Development

- AC Software supports continuous learning through:
 - Paid training workshops and conferences.
 - Online course subscriptions (e.g., Pluralsight, Udemy).
 - Internal mentorship programs.
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Employee Discounts & Perks

- Discounts on partner software and hardware vendors.
 - Company-sponsored events and team-building activities.
 - Free snacks, beverages, and catered lunches on certain days in office locations.
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Eligibility and Enrollment

- Employees must complete benefits enrollment within the first **30 days of employment** or during annual open enrollment.
 - Changes due to a qualifying life event (marriage, birth, loss of coverage) must be reported within 30 days.
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Section 9: Workplace Safety & Security

Commitment to Safety

AC Software is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. Every employee has the right to work in an environment free of hazards and unsafe practices. Safety is a **shared responsibility**: the company provides policies and training, and employees are expected to follow them diligently.

General Safety Rules

- Follow all posted safety instructions in office facilities and data centers.
 - Use caution when operating office equipment and report malfunctions immediately.
 - Keep aisles, exits, and workstations clear of obstructions.
 - Food and beverages should be consumed only in designated areas to maintain cleanliness and prevent spills.
 - Report any unsafe conditions to your supervisor or HR as soon as possible.
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Accident & Incident Reporting

- All accidents, injuries, and near-miss incidents must be reported immediately to a supervisor and HR, regardless of severity.
 - An official incident report must be filed within 24 hours.
 - AC Software will investigate all reports promptly to prevent recurrence.
 - Medical emergencies should be directed to 911 first, followed by immediate supervisor notification.
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Emergency Procedures

- **Fire:** Evacuate calmly using the nearest exit and gather at the designated assembly point. Do not use elevators.
 - **Medical Emergency:** Call 911 and notify a supervisor immediately.
 - **Severe Weather:** Follow local office evacuation or shelter-in-place instructions.
 - **Active Threat:** Follow security training protocols; employees should remain calm and follow law enforcement guidance.
 - Emergency exit routes and procedures are posted in all facilities and reviewed during safety training.
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Workplace Security

- All employees must display their company ID badge at all times while on company premises.
 - Visitors must check in at the reception desk, sign the visitor log, and be escorted at all times.
 - Employees must not share access cards, keys, or security codes with others.
 - Report any suspicious persons, packages, or activity to security or HR immediately.
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Remote Work Security

For remote employees, security responsibilities extend to the home office:

- Company-provided laptops and devices must be password-protected and locked when not in use.
 - Employees should use company-provided VPN services when accessing internal systems.
 - Sensitive information must not be printed, stored, or disposed of in insecure locations.
 - Lost or stolen devices must be reported within 24 hours.
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Drug-Free Workplace

- AC Software maintains a **drug- and alcohol-free workplace**.
 - Employees may not possess, distribute, or be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while on duty or on company premises.
 - Prescription medications that impair performance must be reported to HR for safety considerations.
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Workplace Violence Prevention

- Violence, threats, intimidation, or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.
 - Weapons of any kind are prohibited on company property.
 - Employees who feel unsafe should immediately contact HR, security, or local authorities.
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Section 10: IT & Data Security

Acceptable Use of Technology

Company technology resources — including laptops, mobile devices, email, internet access, and collaboration tools — are provided to support business activities. Employees are expected to use these resources responsibly.

- **Permitted Use:** Business-related communications, research, software development, client projects, and professional learning.
- **Limited Personal Use:** Reasonable personal use (checking personal email, brief calls) is permitted, provided it does not interfere with job performance or violate company policy.
- **Prohibited Use:**
 - Downloading or distributing pirated or unauthorized software.
 - Accessing inappropriate, offensive, or illegal websites.

- Using company devices for outside employment or side businesses without written approval.
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Passwords & Authentication

- Employees must use **strong passwords** (minimum of 12 characters, including letters, numbers, and symbols).
 - Passwords must be updated **every 90 days**.
 - Sharing passwords is strictly prohibited.
 - **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)** is required for all remote access to AC Software systems.
 - Company accounts may be locked after repeated failed login attempts.
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Data Privacy & Confidentiality

Employees are expected to protect the confidentiality of company and client data at all times.

- Sensitive data must only be accessed on secure, company-approved systems.
 - Storing company files on personal devices or unapproved cloud services (e.g., personal Dropbox, Google Drive) is prohibited.
 - Data may not be emailed to personal accounts.
 - Any suspected data breach or unauthorized access must be reported immediately to the IT Security team.
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Device & Equipment Security

- Company-issued laptops and devices must be used only by the employee.
 - Devices should be locked when unattended and never left unsecured in public places.
 - Remote employees must store devices in a safe environment, away from household use.
 - Lost or stolen equipment must be reported within **24 hours**.
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Software & Licensing

- Employees must only install software approved and licensed by AC Software.
 - Unauthorized or unlicensed software poses security and legal risks and is strictly prohibited.
 - All updates, patches, and antivirus protections must be applied promptly as directed by IT.
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Remote Work Security

Employees working remotely must follow these additional protocols:

- Use the **company VPN** at all times when accessing internal systems.
 - Secure Wi-Fi with a strong password and encryption (WPA2 or higher).
 - Do not use public Wi-Fi networks for company work unless connected through VPN.
 - Store and dispose of confidential documents securely (shredding, secure digital deletion).
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Monitoring & Compliance

- AC Software reserves the right to monitor use of company devices, networks, and accounts to ensure compliance with policies.
 - Monitoring may include email, browsing activity, and application usage.
 - Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using company-provided resources.
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Reporting Security Incidents

Employees must immediately report suspected or actual security incidents, including:

- Lost or stolen devices.
- Phishing attempts or suspicious emails.
- Unauthorized access to systems or data.
- Malware or virus infections.

Reports should be directed to the IT Security team or via the company's incident reporting system.

Section 11: Disciplinary Policies

Overview

AC Software is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, and professional workplace. To ensure fairness and accountability, we follow a **progressive discipline process** when addressing performance problems or policy violations. The goal of discipline is to **correct behavior**, not to punish, and to give employees an opportunity to improve.

Progressive Discipline Steps

Unless the violation is severe enough to warrant immediate action, disciplinary issues are typically handled through the following steps:

1. Verbal Warning

- The supervisor meets privately with the employee to discuss the issue.
- Expectations are clarified, and guidance is provided on how to improve.
- A note is placed in the employee's HR file to document the discussion.

2. Written Warning

- If the problem continues, a formal written warning is issued.
- The document outlines the violation, previous discussions, and expected changes.
- Both the employee and supervisor sign the document, which is stored in the HR file.

3. Final Written Warning / Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

- For ongoing or serious issues, a final warning may be issued along with a **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**.
- A PIP sets specific goals, actions, and timelines (typically 30–60 days) for improvement.
- Failure to meet the PIP requirements may lead to termination.

4. Termination of Employment

- If there is no improvement after prior steps, or in cases of severe misconduct, employment may be terminated.
- HR will review the case to ensure compliance with company policies and employment laws.

Immediate Grounds for Termination

Certain behaviors are considered **serious misconduct** and may result in immediate termination without prior warnings. Examples include:

- Theft, fraud, or dishonesty.
- Harassment, discrimination, or workplace violence.
- Serious violations of IT & Data Security (e.g., intentional data breach).
- Possession or use of illegal drugs or alcohol during work hours.
- Falsification of company records or timekeeping.
- Gross insubordination (refusal to follow direct, lawful instructions).

Appeals Process

Employees who believe a disciplinary action was unfair may appeal the decision by submitting a written statement to HR within **5 business days** of the action. HR will review the case, gather additional information, and respond with a final decision within **10 business days**.

Documentation

- All disciplinary actions (verbal, written, or final warnings) will be documented in the employee's HR record.
 - Employees will receive copies of any written documents.
 - Documentation ensures consistency and protects both the employee and the company.
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Confidentiality

Disciplinary matters are confidential. Information will only be shared with individuals who have a business need to know (e.g., HR, supervisors, legal).

Section 12: Confidentiality & Non-Disclosure

Overview

In the course of employment, employees at AC Software may have access to confidential and proprietary information. Protecting this information is critical to maintaining our competitive advantage, safeguarding client trust, and complying with legal and regulatory requirements. All employees are expected to handle sensitive information responsibly and in accordance with this policy.

Definition of Confidential Information

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Proprietary software code, algorithms, and system designs.
- Product roadmaps, prototypes, and research projects.
- Customer data, including personal identifying information (PII).
- Financial records, budgets, forecasts, and pricing strategies.
- Business plans, contracts, and vendor agreements.
- Internal HR information (e.g., salaries, performance reviews).
- Trade secrets and intellectual property developed by AC Software.

Confidential information may be in physical, electronic, or verbal form.

Non-Disclosure Obligation

Employees must not disclose confidential information to anyone outside the company without prior written authorization. This obligation applies during employment and continues **after employment ends**.

Employees are prohibited from:

- Sharing company information with competitors, vendors, or unauthorized third parties.
 - Discussing sensitive projects in public places (airports, restaurants, conferences).
 - Posting or sharing confidential details on social media.
 - Transferring company documents to personal accounts, devices, or cloud storage services.
-

Intellectual Property

All intellectual property (IP) created by employees within the scope of their employment, or using company resources, is the sole property of AC Software. This includes:

- Software code, tools, and applications.
- Technical designs, documentation, and processes.
- Creative works developed for marketing, sales, or internal purposes.

Employees may not claim ownership or rights to work produced as part of their job duties.

Handling Sensitive Information

- Confidential information should only be accessed by employees with a legitimate business need.
 - Files should be stored on company-approved systems and never on personal devices.
 - Printed documents must be stored securely and shredded when no longer needed.
 - Email transmission of sensitive data must be encrypted when possible.
-

Third-Party Agreements

Employees must respect confidentiality obligations associated with third-party partners, clients, and vendors. Breaches of third-party NDAs may expose both AC Software and the employee to legal liability.

Violations & Consequences

Violations of this policy, including unauthorized disclosure or misuse of confidential information, may result in:

- Disciplinary action (up to and including termination).
 - Legal action for damages or injunctions.
 - Loss of professional trust and potential liability for the employee.
-

Employee Acknowledgment

All employees are required to sign a **Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)** during onboarding. This agreement formalizes the obligations described in this section and ensures compliance with federal, state, and contractual laws.

Section 13: Performance & Development

Commitment to Growth

AC Software believes that our employees are our greatest asset. We are committed to providing continuous learning and growth opportunities to help employees advance their careers while contributing to the company's success.

We view performance management as a **partnership between employees, managers, and the company** — focused on feedback, improvement, and professional development.

Performance Reviews

- **Frequency:** Formal performance reviews are conducted **annually** (typically in Q4). Informal check-ins and feedback sessions occur throughout the year.
- **Criteria:** Evaluations consider:
 - Technical skills and quality of work.
 - Collaboration and teamwork.
 - Initiative and problem-solving.
 - Communication and professionalism.
 - Alignment with AC Software's mission, vision, and values.
- **Outcomes:** Reviews may result in merit-based salary adjustments, bonus eligibility, and career development plans.

Goal Setting & Feedback

- At the beginning of each review cycle, employees and managers set clear, measurable goals.
- Goals may include technical milestones, project deliverables, or skill development targets.
- Feedback is **two-way**: employees are encouraged to provide feedback to managers and the company as well.
- Progress is reviewed mid-year to ensure alignment and allow adjustments.

Promotions & Career Growth

- **Promotion Process:** Promotions are based on performance, skills, and demonstrated readiness for additional responsibilities. Employees may be recommended by managers or apply for internal opportunities.
- **Career Paths:** AC Software supports multiple career tracks, including:
 - **Technical track** (e.g., Junior Developer → Developer → Senior Developer → Architect).
 - **Management track** (e.g., Team Lead → Manager → Director).
- **Transparency:** Promotion criteria are documented and available through the HR portal to ensure fairness and consistency.

Training & Development Programs

AC Software invests in professional development to help employees build new skills and remain competitive in the software industry. Programs include:

- Paid access to online learning platforms (Pluralsight, Coursera, Udemy).
- Internal workshops on software engineering best practices, security, and agile methodologies.
- Tuition reimbursement for relevant degrees, certifications, or continuing education (up to \$3,000/year).
- Leadership development for employees preparing for management roles.

Mentorship & Coaching

- Employees may participate in a structured mentorship program, pairing junior employees with senior staff.

- Managers provide ongoing coaching and support to help employees develop both technical and soft skills.
 - Peer learning groups and knowledge-sharing sessions are encouraged across teams.
-

Recognition & Rewards

To celebrate contributions, AC Software offers:

- **Spot Bonuses** for exceptional performance.
 - **Innovation Awards** for employees who introduce ideas that improve products or processes.
 - **Annual Employee Recognition Program** honoring individuals and teams that exemplify company values.
-

Employee Responsibility

Employees are expected to take ownership of their development by:

- Engaging in training opportunities.
Seeking feedback proactively.
 - Collaborating with managers to set meaningful goals.
 - Staying up-to-date with industry trends and technologies.
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Section 14: Separation & Exit Policies

Overview

While AC Software hopes that all employees find long-term success within the company, we recognize that circumstances may arise where employment must end. This section outlines the company's policies regarding resignation, termination, final pay, and exit procedures.

Voluntary Resignation

- Employees who choose to resign are requested to provide at least **two weeks' written notice** to their immediate supervisor.
- Employees in leadership or specialized technical roles may be asked to provide up to **four weeks' notice** to ensure a smooth transition.
- Employees should complete a **resignation form** in the HR portal and participate in a transition plan to transfer knowledge and responsibilities.

Involuntary Termination

Termination initiated by AC Software may occur for various reasons, including:

- **Performance-related termination:** Failure to meet performance expectations after coaching and progressive discipline.
- **Policy violations:** Serious misconduct such as theft, harassment, or data breaches.
- **Position elimination:** Layoffs due to restructuring, downsizing, or business needs.

In all cases, HR will review the termination to ensure compliance with company policy and applicable laws.

Job Abandonment

Employees who fail to report to work for **three consecutive scheduled workdays** without notifying their supervisor may be considered to have abandoned their job. Such cases will be treated as voluntary resignation.

Final Paychecks

- Employees will receive their final paycheck on the next scheduled payday or sooner if required by state law.
- Final pay includes all wages owed up to the last day worked, as well as accrued but unused PTO (unless otherwise prohibited by state regulations).
- Deductions for outstanding company property, loans, or other authorized items may be applied where permitted by law.

Benefits Continuation

- Employees may be eligible to continue health benefits under **COBRA** or applicable state programs.
- Information about COBRA coverage and deadlines will be provided during the exit process.
- Retirement benefits (401k) remain the employee's property, and instructions for rollover or withdrawal will be provided.

Return of Company Property

Before the last day of work, employees must return all company property, including:

- Laptops, monitors, and peripherals.
- Company ID badge and access cards.
- Keys, credit cards, and mobile devices.
- Any confidential documents or data storage devices.

Failure to return company property may result in deductions from the final paycheck, as permitted by law.

Exit Interviews

AC Software conducts **exit interviews** to:

- Gather feedback on the employee's experience.
- Identify areas for improvement in policies, culture, or management.
- Provide employees with information about post-employment obligations (such as confidentiality).

Exit interviews are confidential and voluntary but strongly encouraged.

Post-Employment Obligations

- Employees remain bound by their **Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)** even after leaving the company.
 - Former employees are prohibited from disclosing trade secrets, client information, or proprietary data.
 - Employees must avoid conflicts of interest with AC Software as outlined in the Code of Conduct.
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Section 15: Employee Acknowledgment

Purpose

The Employee Acknowledgment confirms that each employee has received, read, and understood AC Software's Employee Handbook. Signing this acknowledgment does not create a contract of employment, nor does it alter the **at-will employment relationship** between the employee and AC Software.

Acknowledgment Statement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the **AC Software Employee Handbook**. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

I further understand that:

- This handbook is intended as a general guide to company policies, procedures, and benefits, and is not an employment contract.
 - AC Software may revise, rescind, or add to any policies, benefits, or practices described in this handbook at its sole discretion, with or without notice, as permitted by law.
 - My employment with AC Software is **at-will** and may be terminated by me or by the company at any time, with or without cause or notice, unless otherwise prohibited by law or modified by a written agreement signed by the CEO.
 - I agree to abide by the policies outlined in this handbook and understand that violation of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
-

Employee Information

Employee Name (Print): _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Company Representative

Manager/HR Representative (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____