

An organization's HR policies are a set of rules that define the duties and responsibilities, privileges and rights, and guidelines for conduct expected of employees.

Organizations can adapt many HR policies to meet their needs. Some companies have very few policies, while others have several hundred or more.

HR managers should understand why such workplace policies are crucial for HR operations, what they should include, how they should organize, when they should be updated, who should update them, and how often management should review HR policies and communicate with employees and other stakeholders, such as trade unions.

The new employee doesn't know the rules unless you have HR policies.

To learn more via video, watch the video below. Otherwise, skip ahead to continue reading.

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Below, we list sample HR policies to follow to ease the onboarding process.

14 Essential HR Policies and Practices

Here is the list of 14 essential HR policies and practices that HR professionals and experts use:

1. At-will Employment

Employers can terminate employees anytime, with or without cause or notice. This policy aligns employees and their organizations. Employees should not expect any job security beyond their current moment in time; in addition, they can leave for a logical reason.

2. Breach of Contract

Employers can terminate employees for breaching company policies, such as being late to work without permission or damaging company property and items belonging to other staff members. This policy protects employers against unjustified termination claims.

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3. Non-Compete, Confidentiality, and Employment Contracts

All employees must sign these agreements. It is a legal requirement for any company with more than 25 people in its workforce, or that does not have an HR department (which requires signatories at least once per month).

You can update these contracts when necessary but always include clauses preventing disclosure of confidential business information, among other topics such as intellectual property

rights issues.

It's important for each employee who signs these documents to understand them before signing them because if they are broken for any reason, there are legal consequences.

4. Accidents and Injuries

This safety and workplace violence policy states that the employer or the company shall provide a safe and healthy environment to its employees and that the company shall see to any form of injury, workplace violence, or harassment right away.

It complies with state and federal laws. Moreover, each employee has the right to stay safe, which increases the employer's goodwill.

The health and safety policy states that employers should provide employees with access to medical care as soon as possible in case they are injured at work. In fact, they should report the injury to their supervisor and fill out all the necessary forms.

If an employee is unable to work and misses some days due to a job-related injury, employers must compensate them under the Workers' Compensation Act. Furthermore, OSHA law requires organizations to maintain incident reports.

5. Job Reassignment

This policy applies to employees who become disabled due to illness, injury, or pregnancy. It requires employers to offer them a modified position (a job modification) if one becomes available. This policy is in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each organization must follow applicable laws to protect employees' civil liberty.

Fundamental HR policies

If there isn't one, the employer will reassign them to another suitable position when their condition improves without loss of pay or employee benefits so long as this doesn't result in additional expense for the organization.

Job reassignment imparts a sense of security and comfort to a temporarily disabled employee.

6. Nursing Mothers

The lactation policy ensures that nursing mothers can express milk at work and provide it for their children without fear of being harassed or discriminated against by coworkers, supervisors, customers, visitors, or other business associates.

7. Attendance and Leave

An attendance policy is part of an HR department's overall human resource management strategy. It deals with employees notifying their immediate supervisors before taking time off, absenteeism, and tardiness.

Life doesn't work in a straight line, so we can never anticipate sickness or other emergencies before they happen. Therefore, having a good attendance policy in place is vital.

Remember to be kind. When their leaves are up, they might need more time off. Some courts have ruled that leave may qualify as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Make sure to seek professional advice and guidance if this is something of concern so employers can meet all their obligations under laws like the ADA or the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

We should have a clear, concise, up-to-date written policy for FMLA to cover a company. An excellent example of this is Miami-based employment attorney Lisa Berg with Stearns Weaver Miller, who says that they need an updated document that covers:

Eligibility requirements under the Leave Act (FMLA);

How time off will be calculated;

Notice rules when employees request time off from work due to illness or injury;

Medical certification guidance about what needs documentation to take insured leaves on behalf of their employers;

The leave policy requires prior notification to the immediate supervisor or HR department that the employee will not return to work. Employees should ask someone else if they want to apply for sick leave and can't do it themselves.

The employee handbook must contain the company's mission, vision, and policies to date.

8. Code of Conduct

Dress codes are often created to ensure a professional appearance for an organization's employees. Some organizations have very specific dress code requirements that employees must follow at all times, while others allow some flexibility in what they wear. It often helps to state what 'official attire' means to the company.

Recommendations to develop a code of conduct

It also includes employee conduct guidelines within an organization; the most effective way to do this is to lay them down in writing, outlining the acceptable and non-acceptable actions.

9. Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment policy deals with any unwelcome or unwanted behavior by one person against another individual at work. It can take many different forms, such as verbal abuse and/or offensive jokes; physical contact like touching or pinching; inappropriate sexual remarks or gestures; deliberate intimidation from someone who wants to stop you from doing your job because they don't think women should do it, etc., but this list is not exhaustive.

All types of workplace harassment are unlawful and should be accompanied by disciplinary action.

The most effective harassment policy defines what the term means and outlines how it requires prompt dealing, for instance:

“Harassment includes any behavior that makes you or your colleagues uncomfortable. If an individual feels harassed, they should tell their manager, who may help them find a permanent solution.”

Sexual harassment at the workplace is common, and this policy protects individuals against each other so the normal workflow remains intact.

10. Conflict of Interest

This policy outlines the rules regarding an employee's interest, challenging the company's interest. Examples of such activities include:

Increase in a competitor's sales through your employee's activities

An employee uses their company status for personal gains

An employee using the company's property to facilitate an external business

11. Vacation and Paid Time OFF (PTO)

Employees should have the opportunity for at least 20 days off or an average of five weeks of vacation annually.

Paid time OFF (PTO) can be accumulated and taken as one continuous block when it occurs.

The employer may ask employees to take their PTO as they like; this includes being able to use annual leave, sick leave, personal day(s), bereavement day(s), public holidays, etc., but not more than 40% of the total amount accrued in any given 12-month period.

12. Benefits and Perks

Employees must identify perks and benefits upfront. This includes health insurance, retirement plans (401k), paid time off (PTO) provided by the company or as part of a union contract, etc.

Where possible, the employer may also identify any financial incentives it has for differentiating itself from other companies in its field. Workers are looking for eligibility for awards and bonuses.

Employee Benefits

Benefits include any items not related to salary: dental coverage, vacation days/time off allotment, PTO policy/days per year allotted with pay, sick leave accrual rates and specific HR policies around them; holiday leave availability and time utilized each calendar year with compensation; free lunches on work dates every week or month – and the list goes on.

The employee handbook with all the HR policies can become confusing to employees.

The employer should identify what is and isn't included in the benefits package.

13. Employee Termination and Resignation

The employer should also mention the time frames for termination or resignation. The rulebook should explain all employment laws, including those that apply to discriminatory practices and payroll deductions. HR professionals must become aware of such HR policies to construct for their own company.

Employee Termination

Employers might have specific steps they follow when terminating employees, such as a formal meeting with HR and the employee in question before announcing dismissal from their position.

Resignations

Employees must give two weeks' notice if they intend to resign from their positions (unless it will affect the company).

Arbitration agreements

In some cases, employers require new hires to sign arbitration agreements that state disputes between them, and the company won't go through legal proceedings but rather through private mediation sessions.

14. Social Media Policy

As part of the social media policy, ensure that employees' personal opinions don't represent their company. We recommend using a disclaimer such as "opinions are my own" to avoid misunderstandings with other people who might think they are authorized or endorsed by the company they work for.

Use this opportunity to clarify if something is just a solid opinion and not based on facts. This will help give more context to what has been said and prevent confusion in future conversations.

To give a good impression, please don't use anything that could offend someone upon overhearing it.

Conclusion

Coming to the end of this article, we hope you now have a good idea of some essential HR policies and practices to implement in your small or large business. Keep the following list, and review them for best practices:

Criminatory Practices

Payroll Deductions

Employee Termination

Resignation Processes

Arbitration Agreements

These human resource policies in employee handbooks set expectations between employees and employers; their roles are clearer, helping everyone work. In addition, LinkedIn is a good resource for checking out some out-of-the-box articles on HR policies.

What are some policies that you follow in your company? Which policies are you still in the process of implementing? Share with us your thoughts, and feel free to get in touch if we can help.

FAQs

Here are the most frequently asked questions about HR policies.

What is the purpose of an HR policy?

HR policies provide a framework for managing employee relations, ensuring fairness, consistency, and alignment with company culture and legal requirements.

How should a company implement an HR policy?

Implementing HR policies involves drafting clear guidelines, training managers, communicating expectations to employees, and ensuring compliance through regular reviews.

What is a drug and alcohol policy in HR?

A drug and alcohol policy outlines the company's expectations and procedures regarding substance use in the workplace to maintain a safe and productive environment.

How can HR policies improve employee relations?

HR policies clarify expectations, resolve employee grievances efficiently, and establish transparent procedures, fostering trust and improving workplace harmony.

What role does company culture play in HR policy development?

HR policies should align with and support the company culture, reinforcing the organization's values and enhancing employee engagement.

How do HR policies address employee grievances?

HR policies typically include grievance procedures that provide employees with a clear, fair, and confidential process to raise and resolve concerns.

Why is an HR strategy important for effective policies?

An HR strategy ensures that policies are aligned with the company's goals, fostering a cohesive approach to talent management and organizational development.

What are the key considerations for updating HR policies?

Key considerations include changes in employment laws, evolving company culture, employee feedback, and emerging workplace trends.

How can HR policies affect employee performance?

Well-implemented HR policies create a structured, supportive environment that promotes accountability, motivation, and performance.