

# HUMAN RESOURCES BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



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HR outsourcing offers a wide range of competitive advantages for businesses. How? Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs) employ a team of experts who handle everything from risk management, to payroll, employee benefits, compliance, recruiting, unemployment, and more. Having these experts at your disposal can save you time, money and headaches.

The following guide features insights on the challenges faced by today's business owners and leaders, and the tools a PEO can offer to help solve these problems for your business.

Are your employees performing to your expectations? If not, do you know why? Better yet, do they know why? How clearly defined are your expectations, and what tools do you provide employees to be able to meet your expectations?

Often, employers hire a new employee who interviews well, has a great attitude, and comes across as a team player. However, after a couple of weeks or months of observation, the employer is disappointed in the choice he or she made in hiring this new team member. The individual may have interviewed well, and answered detailed questions about past job responsibilities in a manner that indicated he or she was the best choice for the organization, but later fails to meet the employer's expectations.

## Shared Responsibility for Success

We may be quick to think that employees must have embellished their past job experience in an effort to "land" a job when in fact, we should look first at the tools we provided them to succeed in their new roles. Did you provide a [job description](#) detailing their duties and responsibilities and performance expectations?

When you identified that they were not performing to your expectations, did you ask if there was anything they needed to help them better perform their jobs? Did you do a 30-day performance review and identify the areas that you felt needed improvement and provide guidance on those expectations, along with a timeline?

## Performance Reviews, Job Descriptions Set Expectations

Employers need to recognize that both job descriptions and performance reviews are invaluable tools not only to their new staff members, but to the company as well. By providing employees with job descriptions, you have given them a detailed description of what their job functions are, as well as the corresponding performance expectations.

Meeting with an employee at incremental times to evaluate his or her performance may seem like a waste of valuable time at that moment, but it pales in comparison to starting the [recruiting process](#) again and training another new employee. In the end, if you have provided your employee with the expectations of his or her role and you have given guidance by way of performance review, if it doesn't work out then you are well documented on why it was necessary to terminate the employee.



# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: Is It Really Necessary?

You want your employees to be invested in their jobs and the company's success, so you must also be sure to invest in your employees by communicating clearly, setting expectations, and providing feedback in the form of regular performance evaluations. A little time invested initially may save you a lot of money down the line.

Working with a [Professional Employer Organization](#) (PEO) or HR Outsourcing firm gives you access to a wealth of HR expertise that can help with performance management, job descriptions, employee handbooks, discipline, documentation and more.



# MAKE BETTER HIRES WITH RECRUITING SUPPORT

Hiring the correct people for the right jobs is essential to every organization's success. Recruiting can be a daunting task; however, in order to hire the right person, a company first must locate one or more viable candidates. Companies have many important decisions to make, including whom to target, how to present the opening and the organization, whether to [promote from within or source candidates externally](#), and how to handle the recruiting process itself.

With the numerous online job boards these days, it is difficult to know which, if any, are right for your organization and the position you're trying to fill. Even within individual job boards, the number of options for your job advertisement can be overwhelming. More targeted opportunities can exist by publishing job openings with local trade schools, colleges or state job boards.

Another important factor to consider is whether to manage the recruiting process yourself or work with an employment agency or other partner to locate and screen qualified applicants.

Errors made in the [recruiting process](#) may have far-reaching implications for an organization. Not only are hiring mistakes costly and time-consuming, the company also risks exposure to potential litigation by unknowingly violating employment laws in the job posting itself. Further, laws and requirements exist addressing record retention and applicant tracking, so it's important to have proper systems in place. Once your organization reaches the point of interviewing candidates, having properly trained managers conducting those interviews is critical, both to avoid legal exposure and to facilitate a smooth hiring/onboarding process.

A Professional Employer Organization (PEO) provides a team of experts who can provide recruiting support and help guide you through the process to ensure that your company is positioned for success when recruiting for every opening within the organization, from entry to executive level. Trained HR Managers can answer questions and ensure that job postings are compliant, effective and target the most qualified candidates. You may also gain access to [pre-screening tools](#), such as the [Predictive Index](#), to help identify candidates best suited for both the position and your Company culture.

# WHY IS EMPLOYEE TRAINING SO IMPORTANT?

Training is one of the most critical areas that often is overlooked by employers. With the increase of employment-related lawsuits, investing in effective training for supervisors and employees can really save employers' hard-earned money.

Regularly-scheduled training that is well planned and executed may lower the [potential for lawsuits](#). Additionally, the courts tend to be sympathetic to employers when they invest in proactively training their employees. Most importantly, employees benefit from training: their productivity and efficiency increases, job satisfaction rises, and training events can even open lines of communication among team members.

Following are some of the most common workplace training topics:

## Orientation

Training should begin on an employee's first day of work. New employee training and orientation is crucial, because it sets the stage for an employee's career and introduces the company's expectations, policies, company culture and values.

## Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prevention

Both sexual harassment prevention and discrimination prevention trainings have grown in popularity in recent years due to our increasingly litigious society. In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court made several landmark decisions which caused training to take on a new, more important meaning. Although the Supreme Court's decisions simplified the employee's capacity to sue his or her employer for sexual harassment, the decisions also provided employers with critical keys as to methods of avoiding harassment in the workplace and rectifying harassment issues before they became actionable offenses.

## Safety and Risk Management

The employer's duty to train is an important element of several Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. For example, OSHA mandates that employers implement certain specific safety procedures. The recent [Temporary Workers' Initiative](#) requires that even temporary workers receive the same safety orientation that a regular employee receives.

## Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity

Equal employment opportunity and diversity training programs are a must-have for employers. Civil rights agencies look for this as a compliance factor in cases. Having a strong supervisor training program addressing how to motivate a diverse workforce with cooperation and collaboration is essential to meeting business goals and reducing legal risks.

# WHY IS EMPLOYEE TRAINING SO IMPORTANT?

## Supervisor Training

Many employers promote employees based solely on their expertise rather than their leadership skills, neglecting to train the **newly promoted managers** for their supervisory position. Additional training for new and seasoned supervisors alike should include:

- Hiring and Promoting
- Discipline and Termination
- Performance Evaluations

Businesses which work with a Professional Employer Organization (PEO) typically have access to a wide range of training topics, delivered in person by an HR Manager or Risk Manager, or available on-demand via webinar. Some PEOs also offer pre-recorded training sessions online for their clients. Training is provided by qualified instructors, in a manner simple enough for all types of learners to understand and retain. Training sessions conducted by a PEO also are documented, in the event an employee files a claim.

Regardless of the method of delivery, a robust training program can help employers reduce risk and liability and reduce the likelihood of accidents, fines or lawsuits.

# WHY HANDBOOKS AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

Job descriptions and employee handbooks are two simple but essential tools for any successful business. Both are used to communicate, clarify and document expectations for employers and employees.

Writing and maintaining [current job descriptions](#) for positions at your workplace is not required by federal law, yet it's one of the smartest things an employer can do to provide themselves a layer of protection. These seemingly bland, innocuous documents are used in investigations, lawsuits and audits every day.

## Job Descriptions Clarify Expectations

A well-written job description should:

- Clearly communicate job expectations for employees in plain language, not “legalese”
- Provide guidelines for managers to hire, promote, and supervise workers
- Support decisions regarding hiring, disciplinary actions, terminations, or promotions

Using standardized job descriptions provides a consistent baseline; employees know what to expect from the job, and what their employer expects of them.

## Why Handbooks and Job Descriptions are Essential



Employee handbooks may not make for fascinating reading, but they are an excellent communication tool and an invaluable reference for both employers and employees. A proper handbook relays important information about the company and its history, mission and vision, policies, and benefits. It also can be a vital tool in helping protect employees against inconsistent treatment and employers from discrimination or other legal claims.

Handbooks should be reviewed at least once yearly, due to frequent changes in employment laws. While there are certain things every handbook should contain, there are other items and types of wording that do not belong in this document and should be avoided.

Working with a [Professional Employer Organization](#), or PEO, gives you access to a team of experts who can help evaluate and update your existing handbook or create a customized one specifically for your business. Credentialed HR Managers also can review existing job descriptions or write new ones, making sure they protect you as an employer in the event of a dispute and dialing in the description so it “speaks” to the candidates you’re seeking.

Having a **great company culture** can give your business a definite competitive advantage. A company with a well-defined, positive culture also will have more engaged employees, better defined expectations and a more cohesive team.

You've invested substantial time, energy and money in staffing your business with great employees, then compounded that investment with the training, benefits and other perks you provide your staff. You can't stop there. Mindfully and intentionally create your company culture in order to achieve the results you want.

## Attract a larger pool of talented job candidates

Everyone wants to work for a great company, and each person has in mind what makes a company "great" to him or her. Who hasn't heard of the generous office perks at **Google**, from free haircuts and gourmet cafeteria food to extensive leave and benefits? **REI** is in the news for paying its more than 11,000 employees to take off work on Black Friday, encouraging them to spend the day outdoors instead. You don't have to be a Fortune 500 company to have a great company culture, you just have to **create it intentionally**.

Decide what's important, communicate that to your team, and stand by it with your words and actions. When your company culture speaks for itself, that will help you become an employer of choice, drawing job candidates to you and making recruiting great employees much easier.

## Reduce turnover and boost morale

When you have a positive culture that accurately reflects your goals and the direction your company is headed, your team can tell. Employees are engaged in their work and understand how their contributions fit into the bigger picture. Communication is emphasized, goals are set and employees are held accountable. Happy employees stay longer, are more loyal to their team and the company, and often become ambassadors for your brand, promoting not only your products but also the company itself as a desirable employer.

## Where should you start?

No two company cultures are alike, and they shouldn't be. Your employees, your location, your history, your vision, and your mission are unique to your company as the products and services you provide for your customers. Talk with your key employees and the influencers at your company to help develop your mission and vision statements, and make "course corrections" on a regular basis.

# GAIN COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE BY BUILDING YOUR COMPANY CULTURE



If you work with a Professional Employer Organization (PEO), your HR Manager can help you with an employee survey to identify what's most important to your team members and pinpoint problem areas, as well as assisting you in communicating survey results to your team. Designing your company culture doesn't have to be a tedious process; a PEO has a wealth of HR, benefits and other expertise from which to draw, and can guide you as you build the company culture that will give you a competitive advantage.

So many blogs, articles and even books are published on how to have an engaged workforce. These articles often either paint an unrealistic image of a bliss-filled office environment or an unattainable, hard-to-implement plan. Employee engagement isn't always sunshine and rainbows. At times it may seem like more of an "Office Space" environment.

In reality, having a 100 percent **engaged workforce** 100 percent of the time isn't possible. Today's workforce looks very different from our parents' workforce. We have many different generations working together under one roof. We deal with flex time, complicated benefits plans and vacation policies just to name a few. Add a growing company into that mix and you can be met with uncertainty and frustration from your workforce. What can you do?

There are three keys to boosting employee engagement, and working with a PEO can help you implement them. Having a credentialed HR expert at your disposal who can support and advise you on communication, surveys and identifying engagement issues is indispensable when making these sometimes difficult steps and taking action on the results.

## **Celebrate the positive, but take a hard look at the bad.**

During the good times, we have positive huddles, effortless collaboration and tons of compliments for each other. Life is good and engagement is at its peak. Company culture is not something we have to "do," it just is. Sadly, this happily-ever-after tale won't last forever, and growing companies invariably experience growing pains. Communication in its most transparent form is the most important thing you can do during these times. Be prepared to receive stinging, brutally honest feedback from your employees. This will most certainly ensure you don't have a superficial plan for employee engagement. When you invest in really listening to your workforce, they will notice.

## **Ask thought provoking specific questions**

Don't ask broad, generic questions if you really want to get to the bottom of something. Be specific. If you want to know if your employees received proper on-boarding upon joining your company, ask exactly that. If you ask a broad question that isn't tied to anything, you won't receive the structured feedback you desire. Focusing on specifics allows you to set up an action plan to formally address items so that employees can see the changes being made.

## **Use surveys or other forms of data collection? Great—now DO something!**

My decade long stint with a Fortune 500 company jaded me on employee surveys. We took them every year and had to answer seemingly irrelevant questions such as whether we had a best friend at work. Granted, there were also more significant questions, but we didn't see any movement from those surveys, nor any follow up on findings and what the company was doing to address engagement and morale. Data collection and surveys can be very useful tools in your

# 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

engagement process, but only if you address the feedback and communicate it to your staff. If used properly, these tools can highlight trends and potential problems before they get out of hand.

Remember, you employ humans and not data. Bring the “human” back into your culture and workforce. Communicate, show action, and address the bad as it comes. Be consistent in your approach and your employees will follow suit.



Since its founding in 1965, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([EEOC](#)) has been working to ensure compliance with U.S. anti-discrimination laws, including the following:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA)
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990
- The ADA Amendments Act of 2008

While employers may not be intimately familiar with those laws, most know that they must avoid discrimination of any type in regard to disability, color, religion, gender, age and race. EEOC laws cover most employers with 15 or more employees, and apply not only to hiring and termination decisions, but also to promotions, harassment, training, pay and benefits. The number of EEOC claims [has been trending strongly upward since the 1990s](#).

## When a claim is filed

[When an EEOC claim is filed](#) against an employer by a current, former or prospective employee, the EEOC investigator asks the employer to respond to the allegations in the charge and provide documentation to support its response. A response can be time-consuming and expensive, considering not only the cost of litigation and any damages awarded to the employee. Another pitfall is the impact of an EEOC claim on employee morale and job satisfaction. Avoiding claims altogether is your best strategy.

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