# 1. Getting Started - Company Background and Information

## The purpose of this handbook

Before you dive into all the nitty gritty, welcome your new employee to the team and introduce the purpose of your employee handbook. For example, the purpose of your employee handbook may be to familiarize the new employee with the culture, expectations, and policies that shape your workplace.

It's also important to explain a little bit about your company to give your new employee a foothold into what is to come.

**Here are some prompts to get you started:**

- We've been in business since [year you lost your company].

- We operate on the philosophy that [company philosophy – A company philosophy is the roadmap that explains how you operate, what you offer, and how you meet the goals you set].

- Our company's vision or main goal is to….

- Our mission: [company mission statement].

A company's vision and mission statement are two different things, but both provide an employee with a more rounded view of what the overall goals of the company are. A **vision statement** describes the company's future state, what it wants to achieve or become, while a company's **mission statement** describes its purpose and objectives defining how it intends to achieve them.

 It's important to give your employees both the wide and narrow view of what you wish the company to accomplish before leading them into how they can help accomplish those goals.

## A Welcome from the Owner

This section should be a personal take on the history, achievements, goals and vision of the company from the owner's vantage point. It should avoid buzzwords and jargon and strike a relatable, personable note that puts a human face on the company's leadership. You can also include short biographical notes about other senior team members here. If you have higher turnover you may want to keep this strictly to ownership who you know will be there year over year.

## An overview of [company name]

In this section, expand on the bullet points in the above section entitled "The purpose of this handbook" and present an overall history of the company and an engaging picture of its performance.

Keep in mind that even if a new employee is familiar with what you do, or has been around for a long time as a friend or customer, they are more than likely not truly aware of the full history of your company You want to give them this information to help them understand the meaning and passion behind what you do so that they can be invested in the business and its goals.

This is also a great place to list company standards/values and creeds that you expect all employees to represent.

# 2. Workplace Policies

Explain why you've adopted certain workplace policies, as well as which employees these policies apply to. If they apply to everyone at your company, make sure to say so.

## Equal opportunity policy

For American companies, you may be required to include an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy statement. These statements typically explain that you do not discriminate against employees based on gender, age, sexual orientation, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability or veteran status when it comes to hiring, promotions and the workplace in general.

You can also give an overview of your non-retaliation policy for those who report discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate or offensive behavior.

## Accommodation policy

Use this section to discuss accommodations per the Americans with Disabilities Act and any other applicable federal and state regulations. You may also give an overview of how employees should request reasonable accommodations.

## Non-solicitation policy

Requesting money or other forms of support or participation in groups unrelated to a company is called solicitation. This also includes disseminating commercial, political, or religious literature.

Include your non-solicitation policy here, including specific situations in which employees may solicit from their colleagues. For example:

- Organizing an event for another employee
- Seeking support for a charity or cause the company has authorized
- Inviting colleagues to authorized nonbusiness events such as recreational activities or volunteer opportunities
- Soliciting participation in a legally protected employment-related body such as a union

# 3. Employment Relationship

## Employment types

In this section, describe the employment classifications at your company (e.g., exempt, nonexempt, temporary, regular full-time, regular part-time), including the average number of hours each type of employee works per week.

This is also a great place to explain roles and responsibilities of different staff members. If you have a hierarchy of who reports to who, this is also where you might want to consider placing that chain of command so that employees know who they are going to for questions, concerns, etc.

## Exempt and nonexempt employees

This section of the employee handbook applies to American companies subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Fair Labor Standards Act and its regulations specify two types of employees: "nonexempt" employees who are covered by the FLSA's requirements for minimum wage and overtime pay, and "exempt" employees who meet certain criteria that put them outside this category.

Use this section to describe the difference between exempt vs. nonexempt employees. Consider providing an HR contact so employees can confirm whether their position is exempt or nonexempt.

## At-will employment

*Note: This section may not be relevant for companies outside the U.S. This document assumes your company is subject to American law and labor standards.*

If applicable, include an at-will employment policy statement. This type of statement would typically explain that either the employee or the company may choose to terminate the employment relationship at any time for any nondiscriminatory cause.

## Recruitment and selection

Be transparent about how your recruitment and selection process works. This may involve background checks for the final contenders for a position, checking references provided during

the application process, verbal and written job offers, conditional employment based on performance during a trial period, etc.

## Non-compete and nondisclosure agreements

If you plan on having employees sign non-compete or nondisclosure agreements (NDAs), explain when they'll be asked to sign each document (e.g., when hiring is finalized).

# 4. General Employment Information

## Payroll schedule

State your company's payroll schedule, including how often employees will get paid (e.g., weekly, biweekly) and how they'll get paid (e.g., bank transfers/check). If there is a delay on the first payment be sure to include that in here as well to keep employees completely aware of their payroll status.

## Compensation

Use this section to outline your timekeeping policy and procedures and any other requirements for accurately reporting time worked. Other compensation details, like how often you conduct wage and salary reviews, can also be helpful.

Detail out how you need employees to track their hours for your records. Whether that includes clocking in through the register or logging hours in another way, make sure it is clear to employees where and when they must clock in by to ensure they are getting paid. This will make payroll easier for you, while also ensuring that employees are properly compensated.

## Expenses and reimbursements

Some activities and job requirements involve expenses that are reimbursable. Include your policy on tracking and reporting expenses for reimbursement. Consider providing a list of business expenses that are reimbursable at your company (e.g., business travel, relocation, training and professional development) and the procedure for getting these activities pre-authorized.

## Overtime

This section should include your overtime policy, in accordance with applicable state, local and federal regulations.

# 5. Benefits

Introduce this part of your employee handbook by explaining which types of employees are eligible for your benefits program.

## Insurance

This section should provide general information on the types of insurance programs you offer to employees and who they can contact for more details. If you do not provide insurance, you may need to include a notice as to why you do not and how that complies with state and federal guidelines.

## Social Security and Medicare

Give a brief overview of Social Security and Medicare matching programs, including who to get in touch with to find out the current percentage of tax withholding deferrals.

## Vacation days

Provide clear instructions regarding how much paid vacation time is available to employees and guidelines to follow when requesting time off. If you are closed on certain days this is a good place to list them and how those specific holidays will be handled for employee pay structure and payment periods.

## Family and Medical Leave Act

If your company is subject to The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), consider an overview of when employees are eligible for leave and the process for requesting leave.

## Other Types of Leave

Explain the process for taking time off for sick leave, performing jury duty, voting leave, or taking military leave, depending on the laws of your state or locality. Include whether such leaves are paid or unpaid and the documents they'll need to provide.

# 6. Professionalism (Code of Conduct)

## Attendance

In this section, highlight the importance of being on time and present for work each day, including what to do in emergency situations when you may need to call in or are running late, and an overview of disciplinary actions for unscheduled absences and tardies.

## Meals and Break Periods

Explain the way that you provide breaks. Generally speaking, you will need to provide a 30 minute unpaid break to an employee for every six hours they work, and a 15-minute paid break for every four hours. Check your local employment laws to verify what you need to provide in your area.

## Dress code

Outline your expectations on dress code, whether it's business, business casual, smart casual, or casual. Additionally, note if there are specific situations that may require a more formal dress standard (e.g., client meetings). Hygiene policies should also be included in this area to ensure that employees maintain expected levels of personal cleanliness.

## Cell phone, media, and technology use

Provide guidelines for using digital technology and the internet at your company, including your cell phone at work policy, company email usage policy, phone answering policy, media relations (i.e. who can be interviewed about the store/film inside it), and social media policy. Consider covering details like how to handle confidential data, types of websites to avoid and cybersecurity best practices.

## Confidentiality

Provide details about your employee confidentiality and privacy policy, including disciplinary action for both intentional and unintentional breaches of data and tips for keeping information secure (e.g., locking and securing confidential files, using secure devices when viewing and storing confidential data).

## Substance use

If you have a smoke-free, alcohol-free, or drug-free work environment, give a brief overview of your expectations and requirements in this section.

## Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an employee's personal goals are no longer in line with their responsibilities. Consider including specific examples of what conflict of interest might look like at your company and outline your expectations for acting in accordance with ethical business practices.

## Personal and Customer Safety Policies

Make sure to document employee and customer safety expectations to ensure that employees are doing their best to keep the work environment as safe as they can for themselves and customers in the building. This is important, not only for safety, but for insurance purposes.

## Employee And Family Discount Policy

Include detailed guide to the employee discount. What percentage do they receive and on what products? Are there limits to the discount? Who does that discount extend to beyond the employee themselves? Make sure to create a clear understanding of the discount parameters from the beginning.

## Harassment, discrimination or violence

Having a happy and productive workplace means making everyone's safety and comfort a priority. In this section, describe your policies and expectations on general workplace harassment, sexual harassment, and workplace violence.

## What to do about harassment or violence

Outline your company's process for reporting harassment or violence in the workplace and how you as an employer will support employees in claims.

## Behavioral Expectations

Outline additional behavioral expectations regarding everything from how customers are treated to speaking to the media as a representation of the company. You could also include a

sample of a standard employee evaluation/review form here so that they are fully aware what their job responsibilities and measurements will be.

# 7. Exit Policy

Every employee's time with the company comes to an end eventually. This section discusses your company policies for handling that process.

## Disciplinary actions

Explain the steps in your disciplinary action process. For example, your process might start with verbal warnings and informal meetings before escalating to formal written reprimands, formal disciplinary meetings, performance improvement plans and termination.

It is important to include a detailed look at this to ensure employees know the steps that will lead to termination if they are not in compliance with company policies.

## Employment termination

Give a breakdown of the reasons why an employee may be terminated (e.g., misconduct). Include any details about payout of paid time off in the event of termination.

## Resignation

A voluntary resignation is one where the employee initiates the separation or termination of employment. This section should explain the voluntary resignation policies at your company, including when it's considered automatic (i.e., in the case of job abandonment where an employee doesn't come to work for a certain number of consecutive days without notice). Explain your rules on returning company property and equipment after termination or separation from employment.

## References

When an employee leaves your company, they may ask you for a reference letter. In this section, consider explaining that you'll provide references for employees who leave in good standing upon request, otherwise you will simply confirm a former employee's employment with the company. Make sure that your reference letter policy is in compliance with federal, state and local laws.

## Exit interviews

Exit interviews can be a valuable way to refine your company policies and procedures. If applicable, include details about your exit interview process so employees know what to expect.

# 8. Training and Development

Include important training guidelines and materials that can be used for standard positions. Standard Operating Procedures (or SOPS) help an employee know how things should be taken care of on a regular, or standard, basis. These are things that you will most likely go over during the training process of their onboarding, and not all at one time,  so that they can get a hands-on feel for what it looks like. If you have a process for how that training looks, you can also add a checklist at the end next to the Employee Acknowledgment page that can be used to track their practice and understanding of the procedure.

Consider things like:
- Sales Floor
- Phone Answering Policies
- How to Price Comics
- Handling Customer Service Issues
- Opening and Closing Procedures
- Subscription policies and management
- Daily Required Tasks

** Feel free to also add Fun Training Procedures in to showcase the feel of your store, like "How to Handle a Kaiju Attack" or "Zombie Protocol Procedure"

# 10. Important Contacts and Emergency Planning

## Contact Information

Give employees a list of important numbers to reach out to in case of emergency.

This list should include:
- Your personal number
- The store's number
- Any management members they may need to connect with

This list could also could include:
- Any attorneys they may need to direct interested parties to
- Distribution companies they may need to report problems to
- Security or Alarm companies they may need to contact in case of emergency
- Insurance companies

## Emergency Preparedness

In addition to a "who to call and when" list, it is important to give your employee's a general rundown of what to do in case of emergency.

Some emergencies may include:

- What to do in case of a missing child
- What to do in case of a fire
- What to do in case of severe weather
- What to do in case of a power or register outage
- What to do in case of a medical emergency (your own or someone else's)

Make sure that your Employee Preparedness section includes the proper exits and procedures for each type of emergency and the chain of phone calls in order of how they should be made regarding each situation.

# 10. Employee Acknowledgement

Provide a space for employees to acknowledge that they've read and understood the policies laid out in your employee handbook. Also, a great place to have them fill out their initial availability one more time to keep on file with their signed form.

## Availability

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
|        |         |           |          |        |          |        |

I, [Employee Name], acknowledge that I have received and read the [Company Name] Employee Handbook and understand the policies and procedures outlined within. I agree to comply with all company policies and understand that my continued employment is contingent upon following these guidelines.

Specifically, I acknowledge:

- I have read and understand the company's policies regarding attendance, dress code, customer service, safety, and confidentiality.
- I am aware of the company's anti-harassment and discrimination policies and will report any violations immediately.
- I understand that this handbook does not constitute an employment contract and that my employment is considered "at-will."
- I will consult with my manager or Human Resources if I have any questions about company policies.

Signature: [Employee Signature]

Date: [Date]