

## Give Your Company's Employee Handbook a Makeover for 2017

### *XpertHR offers help in compiling handbook updates on new laws, trends*

NEW PROVIDENCE, N.J. – (Jan. 18, 2017) Not only is it essential for an employer to develop, implement and enforce workplace policies through an employee handbook, but an employer also must make sure that employees and supervisors can understand, relate to and use it as a helpful resource. The start of a new calendar year is the perfect time to give your employee handbook a makeover and ensure it's working for you and your business, says XpertHR.

According to Beth Zoller, XpertHR legal editor, employee handbooks should serve two purposes: "As legal protection and as a resource for your business and employees."

To ensure the [handbook](#) is valuable, an essential first step is "updating your content based on new laws and changes in state and federal regulation," Zoller says, noting that this is critical for legal compliance and to minimize the risk of liability.

"Handbooks also can be engaging, and give employees history and context in which to view their company and understand its mission and goals," Zoller explains.

Lastly, it is important to be creative when developing an employee handbook, making it fun and engaging, says Zoller. "Companies should consider illustrating workplace rules with hypothetical situations, practical examples, anecdotes and narratives," she says. "A conversational tone can help draw an employee in and make it more interesting to read. Pictures, graphics and whimsical fonts can play a role in creating a handbook that is easier to read and understand."

But, even though it's OK to insert some creativity and fun to engage employees, compliance should be top of mind, says Zoller.

Here are some important points to consider when drafting or revising your employee handbook:

- Communicate workplace culture. Convey more than rules and policies; include the employer's core values, culture, mission and brand, and workforce expectations. The handbook can provide a glimpse of what life is like at the organization and tie the handbook to its brand.
- Explain the "why" behind workplace rules. "In order to have employees follow workplace rules and fully understand them, it is important that employees see the reasoning behind them, which may motivate compliance," Zoller says.
- Include required notifications. "While compiling an employee handbook that is more engaging, an employer should not forget to provide any required notices that may be critical for legal compliance and to protect the employer's interest," Zoller says. This may include entries on topics such as employee leave, reasonable accommodation or harassment.

- Be sure to discuss ways to train on new and updated policies. Zoller says HR should focus on training as well as explore non-traditional methods such as e-learning, training through social media, digital and mobile devices, and micro-learning.

Zoller stresses that updating handbooks is an important business function because employee handbooks can be considered a legal document. "Even if the employer chooses to create a fun and cool employee handbook, it should not lose sight of the fact that an employee handbook is a legal document," Zoller says. "Certain policies are necessary to protect the employer's interest and may need to be relied on in case of a lawsuit."

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[XpertHR](#) is a practical online service to help HR professionals comply with federal, state and municipal laws. [Resources](#) for making effective handbooks can be found on XpertHR's website.

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