The business owner's guide to

Why you should have a handbook for your company



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Think of a handbook as your company's go-to manual – it is the cornerstone of your workplace resources, containing all the vital information and guiding principles of your business in one central resource.



A great company handbook facilitates clear communication, ensures a cohesive employee experience and streamlines the onboarding process for your new joiners. It also helps to magnify and codify your company culture, creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

While the format often varies, as a rule of thumb a handbook typically includes the following:

- A warm welcome message
- Some interesting titbits about your company's history, mission, ethos and core values
- A collection of fair and legally compliant workplace policies that outline the laws of the land, covering areas such as conduct, performance and disciplinary procedures
- An overview of your employee benefits and perks

Your company handbook should serve as a comprehensive guide, outlining both your expectations as an employer and what your employees can expect from you. As well as informative, it should be engaging, visually appealing and fully accessible.

While company handbooks on their own are not legally required, certain policies are required by law, such as health and safety policies and disciplinary and grievance procedures that adhere to ACAS guidelines.

Failing to provide a handbook could leave you vulnerable to legal risks, including discrimination and unfair dismissal claims. It could also lead to confusion among employees, making it more difficult to enforce rules consistently or ensure fair and consistent treatment.

So, what are some of the benefits of having a well-structured company handbook? Let's take a closer look.

Benefit one

Talent Strategy

A company handbook extends a warm welcome to new joiners, helps them to settle in and sets the stage for a positive journey with your organisation. Not only does this create a stellar first impression, but it also shows that you're a professional, organised and committed employer - which could enhance your ability to attract and retain great talent.

It's not just newbies that will benefit from a company handbook; all employees gain from having a reliable point of reference for company values, policies and support resources that boost engagement and reinforce their connection with your business.

Benefit two

Legal Protection

A well-constructed company handbook serves as a shield against legal disputes by providing transparent, accessible and consistent guidance on company policies and procedures. By clearly outlining your expectations and standards of behaviour, you demonstrate your commitment to treat people well and fairly, preventing any confusion or misunderstandings. This could help you defend against employee claims and minimise the risk of costly legal action.

Benefit three

Slick Onboarding and Training

The onboarding process can be streamlined with a well-designed company handbook, as it helps new employees get comfortable with your company's culture, policies and procedures. By familiarising them with your expectations from the outset, you'll accelerate their integration into the team and soon cultivate a sense of purpose and belonging.

Benefit four

Efficiency and Empowerment

A user-friendly, digital and accessible employee handbook can be empowering, as it provides instant access to key company information and resources. From booking time off to making a flexible working application, your employees will have the necessary information at their fingertips, and answers to common questions to hand when they need them. This frees up your valuable time and reduces the admin burden.



Benefit five

Prevent Internal Conflicts

If your handbook contains robust HR policies and step-by-step guidelines, it could serve as a proactive tool for conflict prevention. By providing clear frameworks, your employees are well informed about their rights and equipped with the knowledge and resources to navigate potential issues effectively. This could diffuse internal conflicts before they blow up.

Benefit six

Demonstrate Progressiveness

While your employment contracts should outline the core terms and conditions, the company handbook can supplement this. Incorporating policies that go beyond the statutory minimum, such as enhanced family leave, or less traditional policies on areas such as menopause or gender identity, signals to your employees that you prioritise diversity and inclusivity and are a forward-thinking and innovative organisation.

Benefit seven

Support Leaders

A great company handbook is particularly beneficial for people managers. It helps them feel better supported and informed, providing the necessary knowledge and tools to make informed decisions and apply company policies consistently across their teams. Providing line manager training alongside any new policies will boost their confidence and update their legal and practical knowledge.



Benefit eight

Cultivate a Strong Culture

Your handbook is more than just a collection of policies. It's a reflection of your company culture and can help create a positive work environment where people feel valued, respected and motivated. The language you use, the stories you tell and the visuals you include make an impact, embedding your values and creating a sense of togetherness. In addition to outlining your policies, practices and benefits, you should also communicate your values and missions, your guiding principles and beliefs and what makes your business a great place to work.

Benefit nine

Build a High-Performance Culture

The company handbook can also play a crucial role in encouraging personal and career development, building a high-performance culture. You can outline your approach to learning and development with clear expectations on behaviours, goals and standards that align with broader organisational goals. This can help people strive for excellence and excel in their roles.

You can also include guidelines for feedback and coaching, demonstrate how you support continuous learning, and outline your pay and promotion policies that acknowledge and celebrate achievements.

Benefit ten

Support Mental Health and Wellbeing

Demonstrating your commitment to supporting good mental health and wellbeing within the company handbook sends a powerful message to your employees. Using inclusive language, showing empathy and encouraging open conversations around mental health, could help reduce stigma.

Your handbook could feature your mental health and wellbeing, flexible working and stress management policies, signpost employees to your Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders and any other internal or external resources and highlight any training available to raise awareness and understanding.



Need help?

A company handbook is a powerful tool that evolves and grows with your business, so it needs careful crafting and regular review to prevent it becoming stagnant.

While it might be tempting to download a generic template or piece together cut-and-pasted policies, it's unlikely the end result will reflect the diverse needs of your business, your unique circumstances or your teams'. For instance, if you need guidance on how to support an employee who is experiencing menopausal symptoms, relying on a template that doesn't fit your organisation's values could leave you in hot water.

Investing in the expertise of an HR Consultant to create a tailored company handbook, one that fits your business like a glove, ensures legal compliance and showcases you as a progressive and inclusive employer, is definitely the way forward!

That's everything you need to know about the company handbook. If you need help creating or updating one or any general advice, please get in touch.

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