

The background of the slide features a close-up, high-angle shot of an open notebook with lined pages. A dark blue or black pen lies diagonally across the right-hand page. The notebook is resting on a dark, textured surface. The lighting is soft, creating gentle shadows and highlighting the texture of the paper and the pen.

Why You Need an Employee Handbook

Presented by
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- We will email you the recording and slides within 24 hours
- Please participate in our polls
- Please use the Q&A box for questions

Poll Question

During a webinar, do you find it more engaging if the presenter has their webcam on?

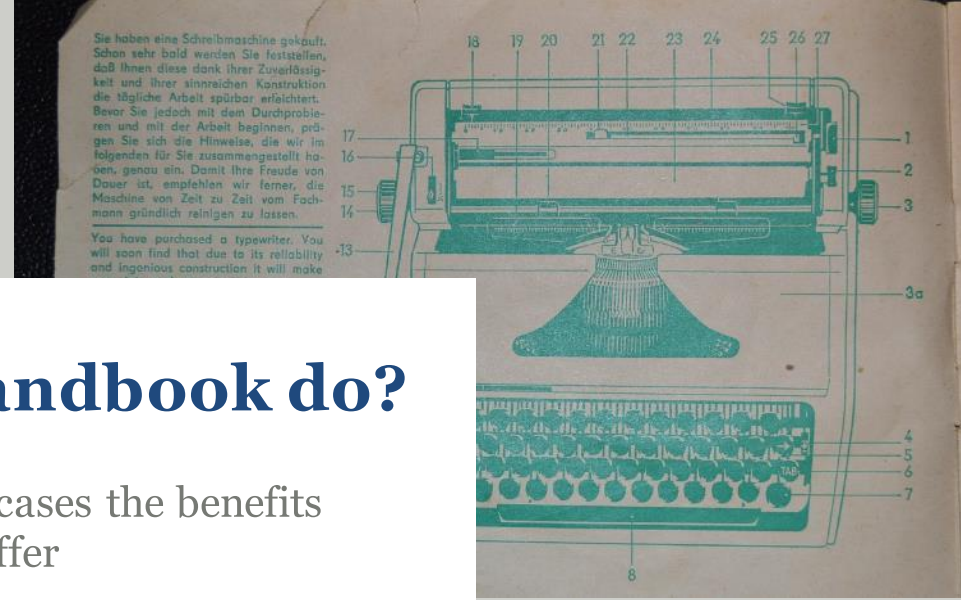
Agenda

- The Purpose of a Handbook
- Policy Overview
- Administration and Updating
- Q&A

Purpose

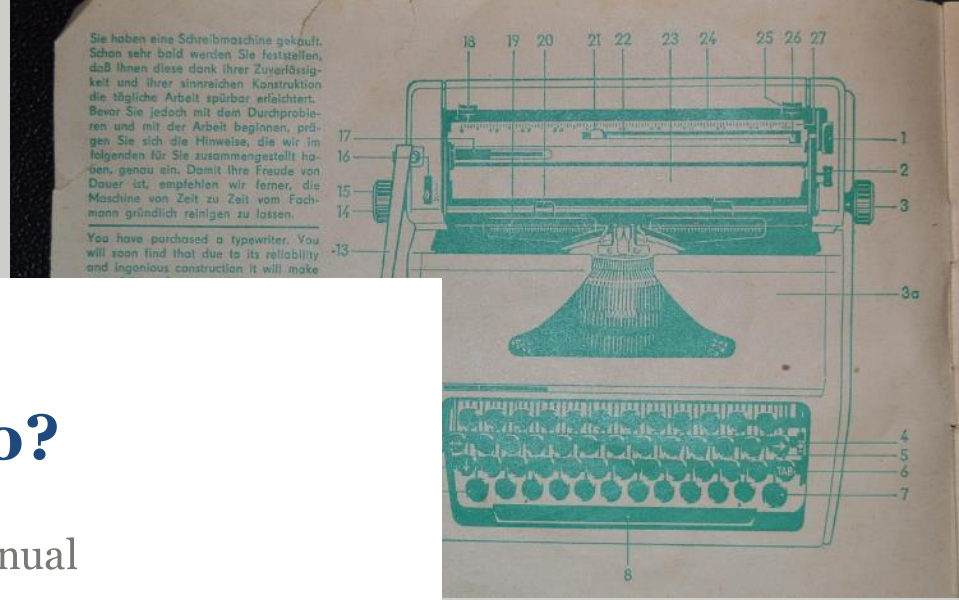
What does a good handbook do?

- Outlines mission and values
- Communicates expectations
- Outlines manager responsibilities
- Clearly explains policies
- Showcases the benefits you offer
- Covers federal and state laws
- Helps defend against employee claims
- Tells employees where to turn for help



What does it *not* do?

- Should not be an operations manual
- Should not function as an employment contract
- Should not promise continued employment



Contents



Who is the audience?

- Be clear if a policy or benefit only applies to certain types of employees (e.g. full-time or part-time)
- Minimize legal jargon and words that might be lost on your readers
- The handbook is for employees only – not independent contractors or volunteers



Up Front

- Welcome Message
- Mission Statement
- At-Will Relationship
- Policies Can Be Amended

The At-Will Relationship

The employment relationship can be terminated...

- By either party
- At any time
- With or without notice
- With or without cause
- For any reason allowed by law



Conduct

- General Conduct Guidelines
- Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment
- Complaint Procedure
- Corrective Action

Critical Policy:

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

- **Federally Protected Classes:** Race, Color, National Origin, Age, Religion, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Disability, Military or Veteran status, Genetic Information, Child or Spousal Support Withholding
- **Classes Protected by Some State Laws:** Lawful Off-Duty Conduct, Political Affiliation, Marital Status, Familial Status, Credit Report or Credit Information, Arrest Records, AIDS/HIV, Domestic Violence Victim Status

Critical Policy: Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

This policy should include:

- A statement that you are committed to preventing and eliminating unlawful harassment
- Examples of prohibited conduct
- Assurances that you will not retaliate
- An explanation of manager responsibilities (generally)
- Instructions on how to lodge a complaint

Critical Policy: Complaint Procedure

This policy should include at least two people or positions ("anyone in management" could be one of them) that an employee can report to and could also include two steps.

If your list of possible people to report to is broad, make sure they are all aware of the responsibilities that come with receiving a report.



Compensation

- Defined Workweek
- Pay Periods
- Paydays
- Timekeeping
- Overtime
- Performance Evaluations



Benefits and Leaves

- Paid Time Off
- Volunteer Time Off
- Family Leave
- Health Insurance
- Personal Leave of Absence
- Disability Leave(s)
- Bereavement Leave
- COBRA



State-Specifics

- Jury leave, witness leave
- Domestic Violence Leave
- Sick Leave
- Meal and Rest Periods
- Voting Leave

Critical Policy: Sick Leave

Change your attitude toward absence.

- Take your sick leave policy seriously and enforce it as stringently as you do your attendance policy
- Make sure managers at all levels understand that you are serious
- Eliminate attendance incentive programs
- Ensure your call-out policy is reasonable



Health and Safety

- No Smoking
- Driving Safety
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Auto Accidents
- Workers' Comp
- Office Closures
- Accident Reporting
- Workplace Violence

Critical Policies (that may not even go in the handbook): All Things COVID-19

If you want employees to do it, write it down.

- Mask wearing
- Handwashing
- Social distancing
- Reporting of exposure outside the workplace
- Workplace sanitation

A woman with dreadlocks is shown in profile, looking down at a laptop. She is wearing a dark top and blue jeans. The background is a blurred office interior with large windows. A dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Work Guidelines' in white.

Work Guidelines

- Off-the-Clock Work
- Lactation Accommodations
- Attendance and Tardiness
- Personal Appearance and Hygiene
- Electronic Asset Usage
- Social Media



Separation

- Request written notice
- Reiterate ability to terminate at will
- Tell them to take their stuff with them
- Ask for Company property back
(make threats if necessary, but be careful about follow through)

The background of the slide is a blurred image of a document. In the lower-left corner, the word "SIGNATURE" is printed in a bold, sans-serif font, tilted diagonally. The rest of the background shows faint, illegible lines of text.

Acknowledgement

- States that employee received, has had the opportunity to review, and acknowledges receiving
- Collect upon hire and any time the handbook is updated
- Store in employees' personnel files

The Big Picture – What You Want

- Consistency in language and tone
- Policies applied based on circumstances or severity
- Words like *generally*, *from time to time*, and *as needed*
- Detail, but not so much that it's constantly out of date

The Big Picture – What You Want to Avoid

- Use of the term *probation* or *probationary*
- Promises or implication of guaranteed employment
- Explicit step discipline, in most industries
- Inclusion of policies that should be separate contracts
- Running afoul of the NLRA
 - Cannot prohibit discussion of wages
 - Limited control over employees on social media
 - Scope of confidential information is limited

Poll Question

How often do you update your handbook or policies?

Poll Question

**Which handbook issue has been the most challenging
for you?**

Administration and Updates



Distribution and Access

- Provide to all new employees at hire and to current employees when updated
- Allow time to read it during the workday
- Collect acknowledgements and keep them somewhere secure
- Supervisors and managers should be prepared to answer questions
- Have hard copies available in a central location

The Objective of a Review

- Keeping up with new or changed laws and regulations
- Keeping up with changes to company structure and lingo
- Keeping up with changes to company benefits and policies



Reviewing and Updating

- Adopt a review schedule – annually is recommended
- You can issue new policies without updating the handbook – just make sure everyone receives and acknowledges a copy



Do as You Say

Having policies you
don't enforce can be
more dangerous than
having no policies at all!



Q & A

